demanded more knowledge of the sources of the slaves who compose the Negro ancestry of the American Negroes than was available. This knowledge, which historical documents do not give us, was, therefore, to be sought in a comparison of Negro cultures in the New World and in Africa. 121 114

As the research was continued, moreover, it became apparent that the scientific problem of the Negro in the New World held implications of larger significance, and that the history of the Negro in the New World has constituted a vast "laboratory" experiment in the processes of racial mixture and of cultural contacts. The Negroes who were brought to the New World came of various West African stocks, and here they mingled their blood with the English, the French, the Dutch, with the Danish, Spanish, and Portuguese who became their masters, and they absorbed in varying degrees the culture of these masters. At the same time, they came in contact with aboriginal Indian peoples with whom they also mingled. But the Negro has not only absorbed; he has also given. The conclusion, still held by many students, that the Negro slave came to this country a savage child with or without his loin cloth, and as naked culturally as he was sartorially, is one which cannot today be accepted.

At the beginning of our field work in Suriname, one of us went up the Suriname River to study the Bush Negroes, and the other remained in Paramaribo to collect folk lore from the town Negroes and to ascertain what Africanisms could be discerned in their beliefs and behavior. When we met and compared notes, some striking things came to light, for bush and town Negroes were, as the evidence in hand suggested, much more closely allied culturally than had been realized, while both were seen to have many aspects of culture that clearly link them with West African and other New World Negroes. 121

Thus, in bush and town, the Negroes hold the same concept and offer the same explanations of the soul and 776 171

PREFACE

776 171 its influence on the life of man, and both employ the word *akra* for soul, a word used on the Gold Coast of Africa exactly as it is in Guiana. The day names associated with the soul are Gold Coast day names, known in Jamaica and heard in the United States, as well. In the bush the Saramacca people are "possessed" by the gods and by *obia*; in the town the Negroes are "possessed" by *winti*, a word meaning wind, and the use of wind as a euphemism for the gods is common in Dahomey and Ashanti. Many of the gods of both bush and town are the same, and they are African gods, invoked today in Nigeria, in Dahomey, in Togo, in Ashanti, and invoked also in the islands of the Caribbean. *Nyankompon*, the Bush Negro name for the Sky God, is the Gold Coast name. The Maroons of Jamaica know this deity under the same designation. *Dagowe* is a snake god in the Suriname bush and in town—the Haitians and Dahomeans dance to the same snake god, whom they call *Dangbe*. In West Africa the silk-cotton and *loko* trees are sacred. In the Saramacca villages and in the town of Parimaribo they are sacred as well, and the names are Dahomean names, known also in Haiti. In bush and town the people dance to the river gods, as do the Negroes in Africa and the Caribbean, and the pattern of the ceremonies has been preserved in part in Negro baptismal rites in the United States. Bush and town invoke the buzzard, *Opete*, so named in Ashanti, and sacred everywhere in West Africa, and the style of dancing resembles certain of the dances of the "saints" who "shout" in the Negro Sanctified Churches of the United States.

342 171 Between bush and town there is, however, this difference—the bush is Africa of the seventeenth century. In West Africa today, for example, the roof of thatch has almost everywhere given way to the white man's metal roofing. In Dahomey, where thatch is still found, we discovered a strip of wall made of woven palm fronds, such as is found on the Saramacca, in a village which had been enslaved by the Dahomean kings in the early seventeenth century and had remained enslaved until the conquest

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[171] of him from whom it had dropped. The same belief in the identification of the essence of one's being with any part of one's body which actuates so many primitive peoples, and is so characteristic of West Africa, exists among the Bush Negroes. It is for this reason that when an African or a Bush Negro dies away from home some of his hair and nail parings are sent to his native village for ceremonial burial. And it is for this reason, too, that for three mornings we saw the party of five young men go out from Gankwe to dig the grave of Sedefo's brother and heard the drum's invocation,

[634]

Osio tintin
Osio be'e dya.

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● 776
196 The night was still and dark. The natives said the moon was dead and this was the time for the dances to the river gods, but since there was a death in Gankwe all the gods might be danced to, for in times of important rituals, like death or the breaking of mourning or harvest festivals, it was not necessary to wait for the day sacred to each god to dance.

"They dance well at Gankwe," said our informant, as he sat by, and then after listening for a few moments he added, "They're dancing already."

We, too, walked out on the path to listen, and gradually we separated the sound of the falls above our camp from what seemed like the pulse of the night itself.

"It doesn't boom, does it?" we asked each other, remembering the accounts of impressionable travelers.

Soon Sedefo himself appeared and another, and we started for Gankwe.

"*Waka koni*, Sedefo," called our host at camp as we put off. He was evidently uneasy about us and asked the paddlers to be careful, for it is not safe on the river at night with the rapids below and the spirits that hover about.

000 The paddles cut the water so soundlessly that it did seem as if the spirits were carrying the boat downstream.

764 hurried us toward the river and had quite got away from us as we came to the principal shrine of the village at the head of the path. As we started down the hill to the river an elder of Gankwe stopped us with an imperative, "You must not go."

776] Very loud and very fast the drums now sounded—it was the rhythm to Kediampo, the Sky God—and a moment later the grave diggers appeared. They came not by the usual way and not under the spiritual guard, but along an overgrown side path. There were ten or twelve men, five of them muddied from their labors, carrying drums and cutlasses, the others, villagers who had awaited them. The men who had been digging wore green parrot's feathers in their hair, and they walked briskly and silently in single file to the house of mourning. There was a great stillness along the path of the diggers. The children had disappeared and the women sought shelter in their own doorways. Stools were not offered us—there was serious business at hand.

All the men in the village had gathered here; they stood in a semicircle about the front of the open shelter. The old woman slowly arose and, taking a small strip of white cloth, passed it once along each side of the coffin and once over the back as though she were ceremonially cleansing it. Four of the earth-stained young men now took up the coffin, lifting it from the bier and placing it on the ground in front of the house, raising and lowering it three times before it was finally set down. A fifth brought out two pads of green leaves, and two of the bearers put these on their heads. The questioning was about to begin.

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787] As they raised the coffin with the putrifying body within it on their heads, their muscles stiffened. With eyes half glazed, and expressionless faces, they seemed there but to do the bidding of the spirit of the dead man whose body they supported. They swayed forward and back, from side to side, without moving their feet, and the coffin swayed with their swaying. And then they began to advance, slowly at first, but after a few steps briskly, to a

dancing to the snake god by whom she was possessed. 764
More people came, and these brought gifts of peanuts, [776]
cassava, sugar cane, rice. The food was thrown over the [[illegible]]
coffin and within the white circular path, on which a man was now dancing round and round in time to the drums. Faster and faster he twirled his way about the coffin, and now another joined him while a third walked slowly about the wooden box, a bunch of plantains in his hand, which he slashed from the stem with his machete so that they, too, fell over the coffin.

The men were dancing to the great Kromanti spirits; the [776]
tiger—jaguar—and the buzzard, two of the three forms which the dreaded Kromanti obia can take. "Obia! Huh! Huh!" one ejaculated, imitating the tiger, as his dancing became wilder and wilder. As he ran about the village he wrested a branch from a tree and blindly slashed about him with it. He ran through the clump of thorn palms to our left and emerged with another branch, and now those about were on their guard, for to be struck with those thorns would cause serious lacerations. But the dancer's spirit, his Kromanti obia protected him against such consequences, for are not the Kromanti men immune to anything that wounds; are they not secure from danger of the iron bullets of a gun or the thrust of a machete? The girl with Vodu ran away as he came near her.

Soon, however, the drums were silent, and another shot was fired—the second salute to the dead. One of the elders of the village, bearing a bundle of several long green branches, took his place on one side of the coffin, a younger man on the other. We could not hear what he said, but as he finished speaking he struck the other three times over the bare back; the first two strokes lightly, but at the third he slashed as hard as he was able. It introduced the one note of merriment that afternoon. The people standing about laughed aloud as the ceremony was repeated. A woman, and then another man, were switched.

As this ended, Sedefo took the place of the elder, and in his hand was another kind of branch. This, too, was long, but except for a tuft at its very end it had been stripped of

Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934

Old Bush Negroes SR8

Saramacca

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764 [783] Then, when we had all washed away the taint of death in the flowing river, we turned and once more climbed the path to the village.

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The muffled sound of a gunshot came to us as we sat in the hut of the headman, speaking of the funeral. "Another child gone," he said, "Soon he will be safe in the earth."

[776] We had not been permitted to go across the river to witness the burial. "It is a dangerous place for those who do not know it," the headman said. "*Ogi*—evil things—are there, bad spirits who harm those who are not prepared, and we do not want evil to come to you. Several years ago there was a Bakra here when we buried another Gankwe man. He asked to go, and we granted him his wish. But the spirits of the bad bush across the river harmed him and he died, and now his ghost plagues us."

A second shot told us that the bearers had reached the grave after their march through the deep bush where living man seldom came. They had sung the *papa singi*—the dirges—which are intoned as the dead is borne to the grave. Once arrived there and the invocations pronounced, the salute fired, and the gods propitiated, two men would descend into the deep hole there to lift down the coffin and place it in the tunnel-like excavation dug under the undisturbed earth to the side of the large opening; would place it so that the falling earth might not disturb the spirit of the dead.

A third shot.

[413] The body was in the grave. The heaping of earth, with the burial hoe, with feet, and with fingers, back into the hole that had been so laboriously dug had commenced. The sun was getting low and darkness comes early in the big bush.

Now the last shot told us of the final ceremony. The food that had been brought for the last offering was being placed on the mound of heaped-up earth. The strip of white cloth to the spirit was being pushed into the ground on its stick. The burial party was backing away from the grave, slowly, slowly, so that the spirit would not be alarmed, so that it

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903
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"The whites have wars against each other. . . ."

"Our ancestors. . . ."

Before the last speaker could finish, a man broke in with a prayer. His voice was conversational and sounded as though he were addressing someone present.

> *"Great Sky God,*
> *Kediamo, Kediampon,*
> *Mother of the River,*
> *Sacred ancestors,*
> *Grant that if the white man comes for evil*
> *His race end.*
> *Grant that if the white woman comes for evil*
> *Her womb wither, her line perish."*

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But the Loango headman shook his head and said, "The gods will deal with them, have no fear. Do you remember the man who was drowned at the Mamadam, and the one who died way beyond the Granman's country, and that other one, the soldier? They came with evil in their hearts. The gods killed them. The gods will deal with these, too."

And another said: "Let them go up the river. The gods know all. The ancestors know all. This is our land, and our earth spirits will protect us, and they will kill our enemies. This is our river. Our river gods will protect us, and kill our enemies. This is our bush. The gods of the bush are strong. The gods of the bush know their bush children. They know their children's enemies."

[186]

Then the Loango elder spoke again: "We have the gods from Africa. They are more than all gods. The African gods know all. They will watch over us. We have the obia spirits, the African obia spirits. Mati, friends, let them go up the river. Have no fear. Our gods are with us."

The men's soft, sober voices spoke the words without emotion. Theirs were the voices of destiny. Well might the answering chorus intone the affirmations, while the colloquy went on of leader and chorus, leader and chorus, now one taking up the main theme, now another. To us the cadenced speech came floating softly on the still air.

was much of white man's magic that was not astonishing. 609
Old men and young men had heard of machines with people 123
on them that flew like birds, but had they not their own stories about the sacred vulture, the *opete*, that carried one of their warrior ancestors away from slavery across the river and into this bush? He had simply mounted
the bird and said to it, "On your back is my home. You [913]
can fly over land, and you can fly over water. I have no boat. You must carry me." And the opete took him. Then
there are beings with wings that range the sky, and some of [776]
them are birds, and some of them are spirits. No, a machine that flew like a bird was not astonishing magic. Then there was the kino—shadows appearing and moving about like the living—that you could see in the cities. Men on the French shore, too, had seen the kino, but it was a gift any man might have to see things. But here was something which talked back at you. . . .

"Ke . . . !"

"Massa Nen'ge!—Master Nigger!"

"Ma Nen'ge . . . !"

And even our town servant exclaimed, "*Mi Gado*—My God!"

Now all this was very well, except that the Bakra, not satisfied with the ordinary seketi dance tunes, kept asking for Kromanti songs—the warrior-spirit songs—and the bush-god songs, and river-god songs. From one man and from another came the expected, "I do not know such songs." The women did not even dare approach the machine.

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At last Apanto came. His hair was braided and he wore a
jaguar tooth on a cord about his neck. He was not so 123
muscular as other men of his age, and when he went about 115
there was a softness in his movements that was unaccountably disquieting. His hands were not the hands of a worker of lumber, nor of a boatman who was accustomed to pole heavily loaded boats. They were smaller, and his fingers were narrow at the ends. Apanto, we discovered later, was what the Bush Negroes called a "tiger fighter." In a quarrel, he did not cuff and strike out with his fists, but

609 scratched like a "*tigri*"—a tiger, for this is how the Bush
123 Negroes name the jaguar. Later, when we saw him dance
115 the Tigri Kromanti dance, we witnessed one of the most
realistic feline interpretations imaginable. But that is
another matter.

Now Apanto was an obia man to be reckoned with, and his fellow villagers and the villagers of neighboring settlements treated him with a deference that his age alone could never have commanded. And it was this Apanto who now came up and said that he would sing the sacred Kromanti songs for our phonograph.

"You will not understand the songs. They will be in the Kromanti language," he warned us. "They are strong, and the machine must be strong to carry them."

It happens that a field phonograph is anything but strong.
The mechanism is simple, since the instrument must be
light enough to be carried about, and yet it often is sub-
jected to all manner of hard usage. To this is added the
[126] hazard of the climate. The turntable is actuated by a belt
running from the mechanism inside the case, and the ends
of this belt are glued together. This, to be sure, we dis-
covered later. At the moment, we met Apanto's challenge
with assurance. We did not doubt that the machine was
spiritually strong.

126 What he said about the Kromanti language was true.
533 The Kromanti tongo, of which we had been told during our
[197] first visit here, we were finding to be an actuality, and
although we took down the words as he sang them, aided
539 in hearing them by the repetitions, their meaning was
unknown to us. Some of them we learned later. Some of
them we knew. "Obia" we knew concerned the spirit,
● [776] the vague force known by that name, while "Amba" was
a deity sacred to Saturday, and was given as a "day name"
[551] to women born on that day of the week. This, then, is what
he sang:

"*Ma djeni ye-ye*
Obia kule ma djeni no-ho
Obia mo-ye

got for the timber he and his great-grandfather had floated down the river, he had two fine cloths. One was older and was intended for visiting the villages on the way, and the new one was for the Granman's village. For this occasion, too, he was saving a pair of newly woven garters, though he would wear the two strands of small coral and yellow beads in some of the villages on the way. At Lamé, for instance. 484 574

Ai-yo! He would see to it that he looked well at Lamé, for Lamé had handsome women, and at Lamé the women knew how to love. His own powerful love obia had come from Lamé, and there it was in his canister and there beside it was a potent fighting obia which his uncle, who was surpassed by few on the river in the strength of his obia spirits, had made for him. Some day, when Bayo was older, he, too, would know all these secrets, for his uncle had given him some of his gods, and at dances he already showed that he had a strong spirit. Until that time came, he had the obia from Lamé to win for him the love of his fellow men, and should it not avail against the magic of some surly fellow who wished him ill, then he had the other which would serve him in trouble. And on his upper arm was his Kromanti obia—the magically potent iron band—which, by tightening, would warn him when trouble was impending. That was the way to go through life—a man asked the gods to help him meet whatever might come, the good spirits with good, and the bad with yet greater evil. 789 776 832

Up above, whirling past him in the pale dawn, the parrots flew, making a screeching chorus in the stillness, and rousing him to the murmur of the next rapids which he was approaching. 484 576

What was that? A boat. Going downstream, he was soon alongside it.

"*Tio*, greetings," he called to the man, speaking in the subdued ceremonial voice.

"Thank you, *tio*," answered the older man, for he addressed a stranger.

502 484 too deep for the pole-stick. When we go in the center, it is slow. . . . *Koti gi!*—Cut across!" he shouted in his shrill voice, as our boat and the others after us veered over to the other side of the stream where the current was less strong.

"How do you know just where these places are?" we asked. "There are so many channels, so many islands. How can you tell?"

"*Ma, kyε!* What would you? I belong to this bush. An old man knows his *river*."

Steadily the boats went ahead in this long, quiet stretch. For fully half an hour the men worked in silence, doggedly going upstream close to the bank, until under the shade of a tree they saw a boat resting.

"Tio, odi! Tio, odi!" Each of our men addressed the two in the boat.

[576 604] "Tangi, tio! Tio, odi," they answered each one, until finally they said, "Odi, Bak'a," greeting the stranger last, as was the custom.

Our men explained, "We are going to the Saramacca country, up the river to the Granman. We are carrying the Bakra to the Granman. They belong to America country. They traveled in a fire ship for twenty-one nights and days to come to the Saramacca. Twenty-one nights and days, mati, without resting. *G'an sundyi*—A great state of affairs."

The man said, "We come from the Marowyne. The river is high. The next rapids are difficult. Let us travel together."

And so we were five canoes. Ahead, we could already hear the dull murmur which would soon crescendo to the final roar. This was the water pouring over the first rocks in the distance.

"What rapids are these?"

● [823 776] "We must not talk about this here. Wait until we pass them. If we speak the name, the spirit will come, and he will be angry. The boat might go over. We might lose part of our load."

Now we came closer to the line of white, which rose higher and higher. Except for the bits of white foam like

502 484 931 It was Sedefo's boat, there in the distance, tilted to one side in what looked to us like still water. The other canoes turned and paddled furiously to reach him, but he had righted his boat before they could come alongside him, and was off down the river to recover what he had lost. The water had claimed the basket back of the tarpaulin-covered load, and a carved paddle which had slipped off when the canoe tilted. The basket belonged to Sedefo. It held his food for the journey up river and the downgoing. The paddle was also his—the finest he had—and had been intended for ceremonial usage when he called as spokesman for us on village heads asking for a night's hospitality, and particularly at the Granman's village, and still later on the way home, when he brought political messages in behalf of his clan to friendly clans along the way he passed. He also lost his best cloth; it was not just a piece of striped cotton a man bought in the white man's store; it had been patiently and dexterously pieced together from many pieces [291] of cloth, plain and striped, in a pattern which was known to the ancestors. His young second wife had made it for him. Her first child was an infant at her breast. When she heard about this, she would think of Sedefo's kunu, and be afraid. Was it so big a kunu that it would punish a child of his wife's family, too?"

This is what the men said while the boats waited for Sedefo to return from his vain search down the rapids. The [776] men had not expected him to recover the things lost. When kunu took, there was nothing that could be done. And it was kunu. The *Bakra-sani*—the white man's things—had remained in the boat unharmed! We looked at the few rocks against which the boat had crashed. They showed plainly above the water, and the current about them made so small a break in the still water that the spirit of this ruffled piece had never disclosed its name, had never before received notice. The three other canoes had gone through without even the grunts from the paddlers which came when the going was hard, for all that was necessary was to go straight for the rocks, let the current swing the boat around, give a strong thrust with the pole-stick, and the canoe was through—a bit of child's play. 502 484 931

We were soon again to see Sedefo's kunu strike. This time it was almost at dusk. The men, it appeared, would not be able to make the village we had planned on for the night. In half an hour it would be dark, and here we were fully two hours' fast traveling from our intended destination. Overhead clouds were coming up from the east. The sky was rapidly becoming overcast. Rain—and everywhere the impenetrable wall of green, rising dark and forbidding. To make camp where we were would have taken at least two hours, and it was growing darker and darker. The men refused to clear the underbrush in the dark.

It seemed, however, that five minutes upstream on the opposite bank and only a little to the south of where we had stopped to talk things over was a village, the name of which when we heard it we recognized as one of the two we had been asked not to visit. There was nothing to do but to brave the displeasure of the Granman and stop there; so turning we headed our boats toward the opposite shore.

In midstream a great wind came up, a wind that in suddenness and force is only met in the tropics. The men shrieked and shouted and struggled until our boats reached shore. But Sedefo's boat, which was the second, seemed to be lifted bodily out of the water. We could see a black mass being heaved up . . . the black tarpaulin was overboard going downstream, and Sedefo after it. [32]

The wind subsided as quickly as it had sprung up, and when Sedefo came back sometime later, he carried the dripping tarpaulin on his head. He did not drink the rum we gave to warm him, but poured it over his hands and his boat as an offering. [188]

The next day we talked with Bayo about kunu.

"Why is it, Bayo, that Sedefo lost his food in the still water? Was it because he felt safe and didn't take care in such small rapids?" 502 484 992

"No," he said promptly, "that's how kunu works. A man travels on the river all his life. He goes over small

572 rapids and large rapids. He carries loads and returns to
484 his own village. But then something happens. His boat is
776 good. He walks *koni*—carefully—but he loses his food, or
his entire load, or his boat, or even his life. Something is
working against him. It might be *wisi*—bad magic; it
[558] might be kunu. If you have kunu, then your enemies can
make their bad magic work against you. So it is."

"But what is kunu, Bayo?"

He hesitated.

124 We assured him that there was no harm in our asking.
776 We had been hearing so much about it, first about
Zimbi, and how he had died from a cut with his machete. Now this machete had worked for him since he was a boy, and then he cut himself, and then, having cut himself, he became sick and died. People said down below this was kunu. What did it mean?

But he still hesitated and looked about him until at last when he spoke, he gave the answer we were coming to know so well—"*Massa Gadu sabi*—God knows"—that answer that was the signal that not alone Massa Gadu, but the one who invoked his name in protection against Bakra questions, knew the answer quite well but meant to keep his own counsel. For to talk of these matters is not good, we had been told before by Sedefo.

It was Bibifo who brought up kunu again when Bayo stepped out of the boat for an instant.

"Better not talk to Bayo about kunu, Bakra. There is a very big kunu in Bayo's family. He does not mean to lie to the Bakra when he doesn't talk, but it is better for him not to tell you about it. We Saramacca people say: 'A snake bit me. I see a worm, I am afraid.' Do not ask him more."

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538 But the Bush Negro has many sayings, and it was a different proverb from that which Bibifo had quoted to us that guided us in our tortuous course in search of an understanding of kunu.

KUNU

"*Na wo' taki: Efi gbuli wois, i sa si san de na ini.*—It is said: If a person stirs up a hole, he will find what is in it." 538

And so it was that very night, when we were camped on an island near the great falls, with the roar of the water sounding in our ears like the very signal drums we were told the river gods wanted sounded that the sun might come and warm and dry them after the long rains, that we learned more. Kasanya, the captain of the fourth boat, had conducted himself so unobtrusively that we barely knew he was there. He was almost as old as Bibido, but strangely silent. He was tall and spare, with graying hair, and eyes that were rimmed with red. We had not sought him out particularly to make conversation with him because he had ugly, open sores on his body, the result of a virulent case of bush yaws, which showed when he sat paddling in his loin cloth. We had known him during our first year when he had been more willing to be friendly, more ready to talk. From him, in fact, we had learned to play one of the Bush Negro games that the ancestors had brought from Africa. 124 [177] [524]

Kasanya came over to ask us whether we had medicine for him. His head ached so until . . . he could barely see. There is that about white man's medicine in the bush, it is to be had free, and there is no harm in trying it. 723 60

"Will you make us a game board like the one we bought from your village last year, Kasanya?" we asked him.

"Yes, but you must have two of them, one flat and one curved like a boat. It is not good to have only one. When a man is alive he plays the game. When he dies and comes back to visit the living, he wants to play, too. Now if there is a board for him, he will play on that. But if there is but the one, he will play with the living and that is not good." 775 524

"You know a great deal, Kasanya."

"Awa, yes, but I'm an old man already. I've had much trouble. Last year after you left the third son I made died. Now I have no one. Kunu has taken the three of them, and my wife is asleep, too." [792]

524 The man looked so moved by what he told us that we had qualms about continuing the conversation with him about his dead family, and so we asked him about the game board. "Why is it, Kasanya, that young Amnika of your
[322] village said he could not make us a game board, fine carver that he is? You yourself know that the board is just a piece of wood with holes in it for the seeds. It is not beautiful; there are no decorations on it."

765 "It is because he is young. His hair isn't white like mine.
524 Making an adji board is a big thing. It's not a little thing. It is on this we play when the body of the dead lies in the house of mourning to entertain his spirit, his yorka. Only
[554] an old man who has lost his wife may make a board for this game which is played for the dead."

"But suppose he did make it?"

● [776] "Then he would get a kunu, Bakra," he said with an impatient cluck which was intended to deplore the white man's inability to understand simple things.

776 And so again we came to kunu, and since he himself had brought it up, we decided to stir the hole once more to see what was in it. Kasanya talked with less hesitation than we had come to expect. It is easier for an older man who has had experience with the spirits and knows their ways to talk about the supernatural. He understands what he may and may not do, and then, too, with his greater knowledge he can tell more without offending the spirits who disapprove of a man's telling too great a part of his store.

"Yes, Bakra, kunu is a difficult thing for you, a white man, to understand. But we black people know what brings kunu. Many things bring kunu. Look, I made three children. Fine men all three. One died, the second died, the third died. . . . "

688 This was his story. His wife's mother's brother brought the curse on his family. He had cut a new field, and the trees he had felled and the brush he had cut had been lying for some time, as was proper, that the dead wood might
[241] be burned off to clear the ground so that the ash might ENRICH THE SOIL.

enrich the soil. Now before a field is chosen for cutting, it 688
must be surveyed carefully to see that there are no snakes
to be injured; that no trees which have strong spirits like [824]
the silk-cotton tree, or the parasitic akatasi, will be [825]
destroyed; that no ant hill whether on the ground or
on a tree be disturbed. But Kasanya's wife's mother's
brother was careless, or unlucky. A small ant hill had
escaped his notice.

"The *Akantamasu* god is powerful. It is a bad god," [776]
Kasanya said over and over, making of it a refrain to his
story.

When the ant hill was destroyed, its spirit fixed itself
upon the family. Kasanya's wife's mother became ill, and
although the contents of one obia pot after another were
used up in bathing her with sangrafu and the serabaki and [755]
chembe leaves, she did not get better. Her husband, an
able obia man, made special charms for her to wear about
her neck, and sprinkled her with medicine with the feather
of the sacred opete, the vulture, but still her illness kept on.
At last they went to a diviner. To the village of Dahomey [787]
they went, the village where the most powerful obia was 688
lodged, and there she learned that the Akantamasu god
had come to the family. The diviner told her how to serve [791]
the god so that she might have respite—the days that were
sacred to him, the dances she must dance on these days, the
sacrifices to make. They knew that it would never be a
friendly god to them, for it had come as a kunu. There was
more trouble and more. The family gave many offerings,
and the possessed woman danced whenever the spirit seized
her, but soon she died, and the others have been dying
since.

"What happened to the man who destroyed the ant hill? 688
Did he get the Akantamasu gadu?"

"No, not he himself. His mother, and his sister, and his
sister's children."

"But why?"

The answer was that kunu worked that way, and he went
on to tell us about his sons. The first son had gone to the

688 Marowyne to earn money that he needed for marrying. He was in good health, and he learned about the river "*so te*—until . , . " he knew how to travel on the river safely. But after he had been away only a short time, word came to Kasanya's village that he was ill, and before he could be brought home, he died. They brought back his [769] hair and nail clippings so that his spirit might rest among his own people. They held a big *dede wosu*—wake—for him for six days in the village, with the little coffin and the offerings which were to accompany the spirit, and dancing and Anansi stories and the adji game, just as though he had died at home. There were many guns, too. Everything was done, and the spirit of the dead son was asked to help the family against the kunu which was brought to them by the deed of his mother's mother's brother.

The second son died in the bush. His own gun went off accidentally as he tripped on a hidden liana and killed him, [789] [229] though Kasanya had provided him with all the hunting obias a man would want, and he himself had a strong Kromanti spirit, so that no gun was supposed to have power to hurt him. The third was married when he died. His boat went over in the rapids. His body was never recovered.

782 "Tomorrow we shall all go and pray to the Mother of the River that she carry us well, that our journey be pleasant, that we reach the Granman's village safely. . . . There across the river is her shrine."

3

761 776 688 It soon became clear that two things dominate the foreground of the spiritual life of the bush—death and kunu. In the last analysis, however, the two are perhaps but one force, for kunu slowly, inexorably, brings death to one member after another of the offender's kin, and it is largely the dead ancestors and the gods who are responsible for the meting out of kunu, in order that the ancient traditions and beliefs may go on. And so it was that daily, and many times daily, incidents not of our special seeking arose to document our knowledge of kunu.

KUNU

We sat one night talking about the neku vine, which is 278
used to poison the streams for fishing, and the ceremonies 226
attending the discovery of a new one, how the ownership
of it is passed on in the female line, and about the songs
which are sung to celebrate the finding, and the feast which
is given at this time.

"Do you use this poison only to catch fish, or does it
have other uses?" we asked guardedly.

"Well, sometimes people use it to commit suicide," one
man said. "That is bad. Sometimes a man or a woman will [762]
do it to put a kunu on another's family." He went on to tell
of a man who lately did this. He had been promised the
daughter of a family in this very village when the girl was
a small, small child. It happened that the girl's uncles
found gold in one of the streams, for which the white man
gave them much goods, and now they were big men. Since
the girl's children would inherit much wealth, they wanted
her to be the principal wife of a man of rank. There were
messages back and forth, and council meetings, but the
uncles insisted that the girl return the gifts she had received
—insisted against the advice of many people. So this *kio*, [627]
this young lad, could get his revenge in no other way than
by taking his own life, and sending a kunu to the family. 776 ●
"The next time you come you will probably see the kunu 754
at work. It is always so. Of what use is wealth when the
children begin to die? One year the crops are bad, and you
have to buy food. One year you go from one obia man to the
next to find out why your sister cannot make children. Your
money goes. Kunu is a bad thing."

Another day a woman came to us with a comb to sell. 439
She had heard that we were gathering pieces to put into a
large house where carvings from Africa were being shown,
and she wanted us to have this comb of hers which was [584]
made as a betrothal gift by her husband who was now many
years dead. It was an old comb with several broken tines
and holes bored into it by insects, but the decorated end was
still very beautiful, and we were eager to buy it. When we 439
asked her to explain to us the meaning of the design, she 532

439 said, "It is not a woman and a snake, as you might imagine
532 from this," and she indicated one or two lines of the design.
"We do not carve the snake in my family. We have a
[825] *tchina*—a taboo—against carving snakes, for snakes are
[784] our kunu. . . . Years ago my brother went to the French
shore and worked for a white man. The white man asked
825 him to kill a snake, and he was afraid, but the white man
776 laughed at him, and because he had a weak ak'a, because
his soul was not strong, he killed the snake. If he had told
us about it and had sent a piece of the snake, we would have
held a burial, as would have been right. But he did not do
as he should have done, and so now the snake is not a good
spirit for us. We must give it offerings, and dance kunu. It
is bad to have a weak soul. My brother did a bad thing, and
now I and all my children, and my daughters' children, and
their daughters' children on and on will have this kunu."

342 Farther up the river, in the deep interior, we stopped
at the village of Opoku. As we walked to the house of the
village head to give him our greetings, we noticed an
unusually large house. It was a *liba-wosu*, a house with an
upper story, more substantially built than any we passed,
and ornamented with elaborate carvings, as were all personal
342 houses of the men. The owner of it, we heard, had
768 been dead eight months. Four more would need to go by
before it could be entered. It had been owned by a powerful
man, and his belongings were many. We could see some of
them through the openings between the slats which formed
its walls—an apinti drum, magnificently carved, tall
earthen demijohns of rum, boxes, the edge of a metal
canister and a lamp. Inside there were guns, and machetes,
and native carved paddles, and implements.

Our men joked about the contents of the demijohns as
they passed, speculating on the strength of the rum when
the containers were opened, and when we asked about the
house later—whether, for instance, we could not buy the
drum, we were told that the twelve-month interval between
a man's dying and the dividing of his property was not
000 yet passed. When the time came, his brothers and sisters

684 [996] be. The Earth Mother, who is the giver of fertility, takes the adulterous woman who is with child under her protection, and no one may harm her. But the guilty man must make redress to the betrayed husband. Fines must be paid by the adulterer, and there is the beating which the husband administers. This beating has its ritual. The culprit, at the time that is set, comes out to the place where the injured husband and his family wait. They attack him with bare fists, although the Kromanti arm obias are sometimes slipped down on clenched hands, and with these serious wounds can be inflicted. With or without the iron arm bands, the beating is a serious matter, and the man who has committed the trespass is severely mishandled, unless he can get away from his assailants and run into the bush. In the bush he has sanctuary, and at the end of some time may come back to his village. The gods will not give a weakling husband, or one who is not clever enough to take his revenge when it is offered, a second chance.

At times this beating is a merry affair. This happens when the adulterer's family tries to protect him, and then the matter becomes a two-family brawl, or, if the village is a
628 large one with more than one clan substantially represented in it, it may become a fight between two clans. Once, in a village near the railhead, a man was killed in such a fight, and then white police stepped in, and the murderer went to prison.

A chief, however, can give the culprit sanctuary, and
622 [998] Asikanu, being a chief's brother, was protected by the chief while negotiations were being carried on in his behalf. Now he was sent away from home to be one of our paddlers so that the enraged husband might be dealt with—time helps to cool anger. This was important in Asikanu's case, since the husband of the woman who had gone to Asikanu would consent to no fine, however large, and seemed,
776 furthermore, to have misgivings about the manner in
762 which the ritual beating would be conducted. "I will kill
684 myself," he had been heard to declare. "I will kill myself,
754 and give them all kunu. My *yorka*—ghost—will come to

trouble them, and I will give the family a kunu, and the clan, too, because the chief has shielded him. I am powerless against the chief. I will kill myself." 776 762 684 754

A clan kunu is a thing to dread. It must be averted, whatever the hazards. And so, while they held council at Gankwe with the husband and his family, Asikanu was away with the Bakra. . . .

At Apresina an old woman sent word that she wished to see us. She was so old and so ill that we had to cross half the length of the village to come to her, so that she might see what a white man and a white woman were like. 776 754

"Well, how is it in the city?" she asked. "How is it among you whites?"

She had heard, she told us, that everything was quiet in the city, that it was as if people slept night and day. Crops did not grow as they should. People were sick. Was it so? And without waiting for us to answer, she spoke again.

"But it must be so. So many, many black people took their own lives, before the time of running away. There must be kunu there." She assured us that it had to be so. How else but that the children of those whites should pay for the old abuses? . . .

And in the Granman's village we heard of kunu again.

"Do you know what they say in the city?" Granman Yankuso said one late afternoon, addressing several of his favorite village chiefs. "They say we are good men here in the bush, because we believe in kunu. In the city, where they do not believe in kunu any more, they are not afraid to use magic to enrich themselves, or hurt their neighbors. In the city they say that, friends."

There were the usual responses from the chiefs.

"So it is."

"True, true."

"Yes, master of the realm."

We looked out at the shadows across the carved door of the council house, that superb rendering of the Earth Mother and her attendant symbols of procreation and abundance, beyond into the great clearing where we could

● 776 754 see the shrines to the ancestors and gods. All about were the many houses of the Granman with the elaborately carved posts figuring his emblem. Under the shade trees the widow was pounding rice. She wore old clothes, and, since she [765] would soon be out of mourning, they were almost in rags. The mourning band about her hair was also old.

The Granman's eyes must have followed ours, must have seen us study the outlines of the carving, and must have followed us to the shrines and the woman, for his voice changed, and now he repeated in a ruminating voice, "Yes, here we believe in kunu."

[192] "Ya-hai!" was the noncommittal reply from his listeners.

The Granman looked now into the faces of his trusted chiefs. He looked steadily and long, searching in the semidarkness of the house for a betraying expression, as the chiefs sat on the low stools against the farther wall, their faces averted, as was seemly.

"Well, friends, kunu has made an end of my family. Is it not so? But the clan will go on. The clan's rule is not ended. Up and down the river tell them that, friends. Kunu has brought my family to an end. With me our family rule is finished. That is right. But the clan will go on."

The customary interpolations followed each phrase. Then singly the chiefs took their leave. Rising slowly, after [576] they had received permission to depart, and with body bent, their hands touching their knees, each spoke his farewell.

In the light their ceremonially anointed bodies glistened like polished ebony. Swift and straight each made his way down the clearing and into a side path which led to the river, where the boats were fastened.

"Fine men, these," said the Granman to us after a silence. "And you, have you kunu in your country? . . . "

5

776 But even after these and many more instances of kunu had come to us, and even though we had snatched a few sentences of explanation from one man and from another, the essential nature of kunu still eluded us. Was kunu, then,

776 the vengeance of the gods? Was it conscience? Was it morality? Was it destiny? Was it all of these, traditionalized into one abstract philosophical concept which, for the average Bush Negro, was no more formulated than are the underlying sanctions of any civilization to the vast majority of people who live in it? We sought out Bayo again, Bayo, who had the great kunu, to see what light his own experience would shed.

"Almost everyone has some kind of kunu, Bayo," we said. "Now why is it that Sedefo, who has a kunu, is so careful, while you who, let us say, also have a kunu, seem not to take any notice?"

We had, as a matter of fact, often wondered about this. Why was Bayo so sure on the river? Why did he carry himself like a man so much older than he really was? What was behind his great self-confidence? Was it luck? Was it a temperamental carelessness? We had watched his amazing strength in taking up our boat almost singly through the rapids, for Bibifo was so old that when he tried to hold the boat in the current, his arm could give no steadying power to the paddle, and the pole-stick he was too old to use at all. Was it all his luck? Our luck?

835 588 776 He answered circumspectly. Let us suppose, he explained, that in making him his father and mother had incurred the greatest kunu of all—the kunu that comes from incest. Now, in that case, he, as a child of such a relationship would be a *gomi*, a "child of the earth," for he would belong twofold to the land which was in the possession of his clan, and thus would be doubly a clan member. He would, therefore, be protected by the spirits. For the gods, it appeared, declared a truce with the child of such a union and gave him a pass of free conduct among the world of spirits. But the children of a man such as this . . . but here he stopped.

"You know," he said, with his delightful smile, "A man who has a kunu like that doesn't talk about it. Kunu aren't talked about. He might not get a wife. . . . "

6

776 115 Fa'aku was chief of his clan. He was a handsome man, with a quick, clever eye, and a reputation for great honesty everywhere on the river. To him we appealed for more light on kunu. We had met him in his village on our way upstream and we had seen him in the tribal council house when we had sat at the great krutu held there by Granman Yankuso. When we stopped again at Fa'aku's village on our way down the river—this village that was so close to Dahomey, the seat of magic—it was evident that the gods favored us. We had come safely through the great rapids. We had stayed at Asindopo Lantiwe in good health, and the spirits had even spoken for us through some of the women whom they had possessed. Fa'aku spoke with greater freedom than we had yet met with.

"There are different kinds of kunu, and some are big and are very bad; but some are small and do not make much trouble," he began.

835 776 588 681 The greatest kunu came from making a child with a member of one's own family, with one's true, true sister or, what would be almost as bad, with a child of one's mother's sister. Murder was a great kunu, too, and perhaps next to that was the kunu that came to the Bush Negro if he informed to the white man against one of his own kind. Then there were the kunu that one got for false accusation, and for repeated stealing, and even for lying, if it were done too much. For lying is not good, lying makes too much trouble among people. And there were many more kinds of kunu, some of which he mentioned. Killing a snake or a tiger and not burying it with honor brought on a kunu, and cutting down a silk-cotton tree was kunu.

776 When a big kunu came into a family, it wiped it out. One by one the members of the family died. Men died, women died, and children were never born, or they died when they were small. "This goes on until the family is finished," Fa'aku said. A lesser kunu could kill as well, but its vengeance would be directed only against the women who carried on the line of succession to office and property, or

if it was smaller still it would plague the members of the family with sickness, or bad luck, or it might make them poor and send all kinds of trouble to them. 776

"Kunu," he went on, "attacks the family of the offender, but almost never the person who has done the evil thing himself. That would be too easy. If I wanted very much to do something I should not do, then I might be willing to take death in the end. But to punish my whole family until it is ended—that is too much."

"But what is kunu?" we asked.

"Kunu is a spirit. We dance to it and serve it with offerings. It is not the same in every village, but in our village we dance kunu in this way. If we dance it during the next moon, then we dance one day only, and two months later we dance kunu again. Then we wait eleven months and dance again. We do this every year in the same way." 776 782 796

"Is this enough to keep kunu away? Would it not be better to dance more often?"

"It would do no good at all to dance kunu more often. The spirits would only be angry if they were disturbed all the time. If you have kunu, you have it," we heard again.

But why, we asked, were not people careful? Why, if they knew that kunu was hard, did they not walk more softly still, so that they might avoid this trouble?

"Ma, kye! There are always things happening, people always do things they shouldn't."

"Then life is hard for you Saramacca people," we said. "You must always think of kunu."

Our seriousness amused him. It was, after all, this way with kunu. When you had it, you did what you could. If a wrong was done, then it had to be paid for. But the Bakra should not think that the Saramacca people weren't happy. There were good spirits, too. While some spirits punish, others protect. 776

"Have you seen our women dance, Bakra? A Saramacca woman's foot can do things, mati. Have you seen them dance bandamba? Have you seen them *chaka*—shake?" he said, laughing, and turning to the men about him, he added, "We will show them how our women dance—and our men!" 535

Chapter V

THE SHRINE TO THE RIVER GODS

I

000 ON THE narrow strip of land below the Mamadam, our hammocks were slung between trees whose trunks leaned well over the water, so that once we stretched out on the canvas, it was like swinging over an abyss to the rhythm of water wearing down rock.

133 778 At one time the shrine to the gods had stood on this clearing, but boats had gone aground in the falls, and rafts which needed but little urging when the spirits were friendly were swung about in the current and lost to their kingdom at the river bottom. Even now a great log lay wedged in between rocks in the middle of the stream. The water had worn grooves into its hard surface, yet there it was, held fast against the timeless flaying of the falls.

821 782 789 ● 776 Nor was that all. One year when the time for the new rains came, the rain did not fall. In the villages the priests climbed the ladders within the sacred enclosures and from on high poured out libations to the ancestors, beseeching them to intercede in behalf of the living. Those who had river spirits went to the waterside when the moon was dead to dance to the gods. But the drums gave back a dull sound, and the dancing was listless. Those who plunged into the river to swim against the rapids while the drums intoned the exhortations did not remain under water long, and when they came up they uttered no oracles. Many who were known to be possessed by powerful spirits paced back

and forth on the sandy bank to the rhythm of the voicees in 821
the drums, but their gods would not come. They could not 782
dance, they could not find peace while the drums spoke, and 789
so this disconsolate pacing went on week after week, on 776
those days when the river gods might be danced to. Sometimes the pulse of the drumming, quickening for an interval, stirred the dancers. A shudder would go through the body of one or another and the dry throats would fall to uttering the sacred cries, but almost the next instant the hand of the drummer would go limp, and once more the listless, agonized pacing would continue. The gods were angered. When the drums called them from the river bottom, they came grudgingly and remained sullen, refusing to make their wishes known, and no gods or ancestors came to counsel the wise men in their sleep how to bend the will of the spirits of the river.

In the fields the parched earth baked in the merciless
heat until it was like whitened bone. The few plants that 731
had pushed their way up through the sandy soil were now 776
brown dust which any wind might scatter. But there was no wind. No rain, no wind, for in the river the god of the wind dwells, and in the sky the rain god, and these gods
are twins, and twins have but one soul, since it is with the [845]
gods as it is with humans.

No rain, no wind. Famine was upon the land.

At last, at the village of Opoku a woman had a dream. [787]
She was a pure albino, one of the type who, together with
those who show by the slight turn of red in their wooly [826]
hair a strain of albinism, are called Toné people, and are identified with the river gods. To this Toné woman the gods came in sleep, and spoke their will.

"And what was it you gave to the gods?" we asked 776
Sedefo, who had fallen silent at this point in his story. 787

"Mati," he said, after a pause, "I am not an important 731
man. You ask what I may not tell. My mouth cannot [829]
take upon itself to speak what concerns our big men."

This much he would say. A boat filled with things had been sent down the river. Men standing at the river bank

776 had seen a hand reach out for the boat, had seen it vanish
782 out of sight. The gods had accepted the offerings. That year
731 the Granman from the city, the white Granman, had to
send rice from a far country to feed them, but the next
year the crops were good, and all had been well since that
time.

[778] "And was that when this shrine was removed to the
other island?"

"*M'an sabi. A kan de*—I do not know. It is possible."

2

782 "When you get to the Mamadam," we had been told by
778 a priestess in the city, "wash your face in the running
water, and call on the Mother of the River three times."

Another had said, "If your foot should trip anywhere, be
783 sure to call on your ancestors, but if you should happen to
778 slip at the Mamadam, you must go at once to the river,
strike the water three times, and ask the Mother of the
[774] River to release your soul. It is a bad thing to lose your
soul there."

And our principal story-teller in the city, who was some-
538 thing of a wit, had said: "You both have light eyes. Your
776 hair is not dark. You are not unlike the Bonkoru people
who are light, and who, up the river, you will hear called
the Toné folk." He was speaking of albinos. "It may be
that you have a river god without knowing it. When you
come to the Mamadam the spirit may come to you. You
may find yourself speaking the tongue that only the Toné
people know, and dancing the dances to the river gods, and
swimming up the rapids. It will be a fine sight to see you
dance to the drums. There was once such a woman. A
woman white as you are, you hear? I myself saw her dance.
When she danced, she wore red, and put a plug through her
[826] lip, and as she danced her color changed. She became black.
When the spirit was satisfied, it let her go, and she paled
and was a white woman again. I myself saw that woman
dance. I saw her grow black while she danced, and saw

her become pale again. This may happen to you when you 538
get to the Mamadam." 776 ●

As he spoke, he began to beat on the table the drum 776
rhythm which calls the river god, and he sang, 533

"*Today, today, O Spirit,*
Hard times are upon us
Ingi-o.
Hard times are upon us. [539]
Today, today, Boyo,
Hard times are upon us
Ingi-e."

And then he sang another song, which he said had been sung at the time when black people were running away from slavery, and is still heard at dances to the spirits of the river, the *watra ingi*, as the river gods are called in the city. In it, he called on the agida, the great drum upon which, in town as in the bush, the Negroes call the river gods, and on *Kopsi*, the name of one of the spirits of the water. This time he sang,

"*I will play the agida today,*
I will knock the agida today-o
Kopsi will foil the magic
Of the crowing cock.
O, I will play the agida today, [539]
I will knock the agida, today-o,
Kopsi will foil the magic,
Of the crowing cock.
I will play the agida today."

3

As we gained the island where the shrine itself stood and [33
looked about us from the high rocks of the sacred spot, [778]
there lay before us in the early morning light a scene of inexpressible beauty. At dusk the narrow strips of land which forced the river into three channels had been like dark machetes plunged into the body of the great stream.

away. It seemed dangerous even to notice the strip of white 778
cotton which showed high above the falls, though the stick 784
from which it hung we could not see.

"Human beings do not go there," Bayo had said warningly. "Human eyes must also not go there."

But the shrine at the Mamadam is a friendly place. There 778
a man finds a moment's ease. For a brief interval, at least, 484
the voyager upstream or down rests there to get his breath, as he makes ready for a new start. Directly below the falls is a stretch of still water, which follows upon the wearisome portage at the Musumba Prati and the struggle with the rapids just above it, while, when continuing up river, the boatmen face a succession of rapids before another stretch of quiet water is reached. It is not strange, therefore, that no man, whatever his need to make time, will fail to stop at the Mamadam long enough to make known to the Mother of the River his errand and to ask for the continuance of her protection.

This shrine is the home of the Great Mother of the 778
inland waters, she who, above all else, had secured to the 776 ●
ancestors of these Bush Negroes their freedom from slavery. In the city and on the plantations of the coastal region the Negroes, under states of possession by the water gods, sing of their longing to join those at the Mamadam.

[533]
[539]

Let me die on the river, O!
Let me die on the water, O!
All the Ingi spirits
Are at the Mamadam,
Let me die on the river, O!

Deep in the interior, if one of the elders, let us say a man of the Dahomey clan, is alarmed at the prospect of the white man penetrating their bush, some man can be looked to, then, to say reassuringly, "Have no fear. They will not come beyond the Mamadam!"

For this river is their own. "Once, long, long ago," the 173
legend was told us, "this river was but a creek. There were no great trees here, no rocks. There were no boats, no

484 But Bayo's pleasant story came to an abrupt end. Down
574 toward the bank came Sedefo and his companion, motioning
the men to join him. They all gathered in front of the guard
of palm fronds, and began to discuss something in low
[776] voices, while from the village came the staccato rhythms
to the Sky God and to the Kromanti spirits in tones at first
[782] soft, but swelling and quickening as they continued.

Sedefo came up to us at last and said, "I will tell you something, but you must not think the people of Pa'aba are unfriendly. I will tell you this. Let us go on and make camp farther up the river. There is a provision ground not too far away. We will make it in time."

788 In the boat Bayo told us that many were possessed in
574 the village, and since here at Pa'aba they danced Kromanti
strong, the men did not think it safe to bring us to the village. The year before Kasanya had spent a trying night here. Two or three of the men had found guns and had gone tearing about the village, so that not alone had the women shut themselves up in their huts, as they often did at Kromanti dances, but the men, too, had had to go in hiding.

"That is why we are going on. But I have a strong Kromanti spirit myself. I will go back to Pa'aba tonight and watch the men dance," he said with a laugh.

3

574 It was already quite dark when we made the planting
[497] ground. Up a narrow footpath we followed Kasanya.

"*Koni, koni*—Take care, don't trip at night," he kept calling to us. "*Mbwogu*—Hurry," he urged, though we needed no urging to keep close behind him in this narrow dark shaft which cut the greater darkness of the bush in two.

Bibifo would sleep in our boat to watch the provisions, Kasanya explained as he led the way, for the clearing was so far from shore that it was not wise to leave the boats unwatched.

"It is far," he said. "Grounds are cleared that way—not too near a village, not too near the shore."

"I'll tell you how it is mostly," he went on, after a 753
silence. "Sometimes a woman will lie about the father of 262
her child. The child will grow up keeping the trefu of a
strange man. But it won't be his real trefu. His mother,
you see, lied about his father. In the end, if nothing is done,
this child will be sick, and later he will become a leper.
Only a bad woman will lie about her child's father, because
only a bad woman will want to hurt her own child. It
doesn't happen among the girls who wear kerchiefs and
live the way the old people live. These girls dance to the
spirits. They are afraid of the ancestors. They are afraid [774]
of their *akra*—their soul—and the Earth Mother. But those [776]
girls who wear hats—ai, Massa, those girls do anything!" [829]

But here in the bush, it seemed, they had other beliefs
about leprosy, he went on. Here they believed it was a kind 753
of a spirit, too. When a leper died he was not given a good [774]
burial. No wakes were held for him. He was given no coffin. 766
He was buried in the Bad Bush, where the sorcerers were 775
thrown.

"When a leper dies, they don't want him to come back again. They don't treat his spirit well. They do the same with him as with a madman. They bury him with no more ceremony than a child, who came on earth, and would not stay. They say it's all because of a bad spirit, and they don't want bad spirits on earth."

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"Why do we plant away from the village?" 361

It was the old woman talking, as we sat and smoked with
her. The moon had come up above the maripa palm trees [137]
behind the house where the leper had been helped into
his hammock, and it was pleasant out-of-doors.

"Why, you ask? Well, sometimes when the bush is burned, a wind comes up suddenly, and sends the flames, down, down, beyond the cleared ground. How would it be with a village, if we cleared our grounds too close to it, and this happened? No, Bak'a, we people of the bush know better. . . . What do you say? Why do we do our clearing

241 away from the river? When the big rains come, the river
361 goes up more and more. If our crops were too close to the
water, then in the big rains the land would be flooded,
and the crops long under water. . . . Yes, and we have to
[136] think of the ants, too. Ants, once they find their way into a
field, will destroy everything. They like especially the
[137] green leaves of the young cassava plants. When the young
leaves go, there is no cassava. So we move farther and
farther away for our fields. Two, three years, and new fields
must be cut, so that the yield might feed us all."

311 Once a field had been deserted, say, for five years, why
241 did they not reclaim it later? we enquired, for by that time
the big bush would have made fertile again the soil that
had been exhausted.

"In this bush we do it like that. Why, I don't know. Our ancestors found much land for us. When we want new fields, we cut farther and farther into the bush."

5

As Bayo and Angita set off for the dance at Pa'aba,
Kasanya and Sedefo joined us, and we talked of crops and
[521] planting, of woman's work and man's, of good harvests
and bad, and this is what was told us.

[862] Finding a new field and clearing it is a man's task. If a
man is about to be married, or if the field a man's wife works
has become exhausted, then he goes into the forest, near
to the planting ground of his mother and to the fields of
311 his family, and casts about for a place to clear. A field
241 must not be in a hollow, or the crops will not grow, and
776 rice needs the sun of a hill slope to thrive. Once having
found a spot where the drainage is good, he looks about to
see if the spirits will allow its use. Patiently, painstakingly,
he goes from one clump of matted vines to the next, machete
in hand, searching for signs of an ant hill, or an Akatasi
tree that is sacred to the gods of the ant hill, or for snakes,
or a natural clearing belonging to the Apuku gods of the
bush. No silk-cotton tree must be there, no loko tree
wherein dwells the god of the same name so near that it

might catch fire were a wind to come up when the underbrush is burned. 311 If he spies a slender bent liana from which 241 the Kromanti "Congo-bush" sticks are made, then he has 776 to be sure to cut it down with the proper invocation, so that the spirit inside the liana will not bend him to its own shape.

Kasanya continued his explanation. "When a field is 241 found, it is the man who clears it." A man calls on his 476 relatives or friends to help him. The men come with their [462] machetes, and they cut away at bushes and shrubs, they cut away the lianas which are twined about the trees, and then the trees themselves. Then they go away, leaving what they have cut to dry. "To take all this away would be too hard, and, besides, fire does the work better, and fertilizes the ground as well."

So, when the wood is dry, they come with fire, and let the fire finish the work. Then the ashes are allowed to lie for a time, for, though this clearing is done during the dry season, occasional showers can be relied upon to work the ash into the ground. Then, too, the time for planting is not yet.

"Many things we plant a little before the old year meets the new," the old woman said.

"When it is time to break the ground," Kasanya went 462 on, "the man and the woman work together. It is then that 241 the woman begins her work in this field. What was done before had to do with cutting timber, and our proverb says: Woodworking is not a woman's affair."

The man alone clears the ground, but the woman helps him break the earth.

"Breaking the ground is not easy," the old woman again interrupted. The matted roots have to be dug up with an iron hoe, for the Bush Negro works as his ancestors did [412] hundreds of years ago in Africa. He has no plough, no beast of burden to help him in the fields.

When all this is done, then it is time to see to the consecration of the earth to its fertile uses. 241 Rituals vary with each clan, and often from village to village of the same clan.

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934

SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

stolen Death's meat, Death would have remained quietly in the deep bush. 539

The Devil Has a Bad Name

Now the Devil said to a man one day, "No matter what good I do, I get a bad name for it." The man would not believe him. The Devil said, "Very well, I will show you." 539 776

So the Devil went to God, and he said to God, he said, "You put a stone on the path along which men travel, and I will put a bag of money there. Then we will see what happens."

Well, they did this. God put down the stone, and the Devil the bag of money. One day a man came down the path and stubbed his foot against the stone. Instantly he cried, "Ah, the Devil put the stone there that I might hurt my foot!" Later another man came along and saw the money. He took up the bag and called out, "God be praised! I thank you, Master, for letting me find this money!"

The Devil said, "You see how it is? I put the gold there, but it is God who receives thanks, while I am cursed for the stone God put on the road. It is as I said. The Devil cannot look for fairness in this world."

The Tar Baby

The King had a plantation where there were many fruits, and plantains, and other kinds of food. But someone was stealing the fruit and the crops. So the King had them put a large tar-baby in the field. 539

Now the thief used to come at night, and this thief was Ba Anansi. When he saw the image he became alarmed, and approached it with flattering words. Timidly he said to it, he said, "Father, how are you?" But he did not get an answer.

So he said, "If you do not speak to me, I will slap you!"

The image did not speak. Anansi struck him a blow, but his hand stuck. He said, "If you do not let me go, I will figures of a male and a female in congress were often introduced into the design. 842 532

842 The ignorance of the physical rôle of the male parent, said to exist among other primitive peoples with a similar linkage of relatives on the mother's side, is not found among the Suriname Negroes. At a religious ceremony in which townspeople alone were dancing, a woman turned to us, and said, "Now they are dancing Afrekete. When *Ma Aisa*—an Earth goddess—and *Pa Lebba*—he who guards the crossroads—make a child, it is called Afrekete." Similar genealogies of spirits were vouchsafed us by Bush Negroes as well, and always, there was the male god as well as the female, and always the recognition that both made the spirit which was their offspring.

593 These are examples derived from the art of the people, from their ritual, and from the concepts they have of the forces that actuate the universe. There also were many incidents to show the attitude of fathers and children toward each other in the everyday run of life.

Awingu did not hesitate when he answered that the child who was with him belonged to his wife. But he added that it was he who made him, and his affection for the little boy, and the child's fondness for him was apparent even to the casual onlooker. Kasanya, in talking to us about the kunu of his wife's family which had destroyed his sons, mourned them as a father. He had made them, and he had taught them to run the rapids, and to carve. He had given them his own gods to protect them, he told us when recounting the tragedy of the kunu which killed them. Misomba, the brother-in-law of Kasanya, had made Adyabu. There was no ambiguity about who the boy's father was. The boy was Kasanya's heir, but he was Misomba's son. Sedefo had brought the child to his brother Zimbi's coffin, saying, "I bring you your child. Try to protect him. . . ."

774 776 There was the matter of slipping. It is dangerous to slip. Losing one's step may bring the soul to the ground in an unguarded moment, where the earth spirits, or what

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774 would be more serious yet, an evil spirit who would be
776 lying in wait for a soul to use as emissary in his affairs of
black magic, would snatch at the soul and take it away. If
[753] this happened, a person would sicken, languish, and die.
Sometimes when a man tripped on the clayey bank, we
heard him exclaim, "*Ago!*—Ancestors!" calling on these to
protect him until he recovered his balance. But often we
[182] heard different cries. "Mi, Awana!" one man had called.
"Mi, Nyamfai!" or, "Mi, Matchau!" or "Mi, Popoto!"
[614] These are all clan names, and for a time we assumed that
instead of appealing to their ancestors, they called on the
entire clan to come to their aid. But one day Sedefo lost his
footing, and we heard him exclaim, "Mi, Fandaki!" Now
we knew that Sedefo belonged to the clan of the Gankwe
people, and we knew, further, that he was most emphatically not of the Fandaki clan.

"Sedefo, you are not a Fandaki. Why did you call on them?"

"My father belongs to the Fandaki. When we slip we call on our father's lo."

"Why, Sedefo?"

"I do not know. . . ."

605 Another day we were sitting and talking to a young man in an upper river village. A girl came and sat with us. "This is my sister," the man said. It was at a time when we were looking into these matters, and we asked, "Did the same mother make you both?"

"No," he answered, "she is here only on a visit. She lives across the river. Her father is my mother's brother."

"But she is not your sister, then," we said. "She does not even belong to your clan."

"Massa Neng'e! But she is my sister!" the man protested. "She is neither of my family, nor of my clan. But did not my mother's brother make her?"

"Could you marry her?"

[582] He considered for a moment. "It would be possible. But it would not be good. . . . And the old women in the village would talk too much."

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place was pointed out to us. The carved representation of the human face of the image was worked more carefully than is ordinarily done. Here the white clay was applied more thickly. The white cloth hanging from its stick was larger than we had ever seen before, the offerings of food and bottles and calabashes more numerous than at other ancestral shrines.

"This is where the yorka of the father of the Granman comes," we were told.

But why the father? What of the mother, the parent to whom the Granman was related? This village did not even belong to the Matchau clan to which he himself belonged. Yet with the pride that this was the shrine to the spirit of the Granman's father went a realization of its importance. Here was something outside the legal order, something which transcended the facts of descent and the theory of relationship. It was becoming ever more evident that in this "matriarchate" the father did count.

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The inheritance of the father's kunu was one instance where the father needed to be taken very much into account. "If this man's children should take some of his goods," they had said, pointing at things we could see through the slats of the dead man's treasure house in the village of Opoku, "they will get his kunu, too. No man wants that."

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Then there was the *trefu*, or *tchina*—taboo—as it was called in the bush, of which our cook had told us. Every individual in the bush had his tchina. Everyone knew the things he must not eat, or must not do. One man had to abstain from eating *anumara*, the great fish of the river. Another might never sleep in the open without a roof over his head. Should he find himself out in the bush with night coming, he must stop early enough to erect a small shelter and thatch it that his head might be covered when he slept. Bayo, we soon learned, might not eat food out of the cooking pot, and Sedefo could not bathe in a creek. Kasanya

776 609 "The gods are friendly to you, Massa. The men have all noticed it. You look upon trees and falls with pleasure. When you see them, it is as if you met with a friend. That is good. But the gods have their powers, and men have theirs. The Rabbit says, 'Evil is everywhere.' Last night, you remember, there was a man who did not look up when you passed his house, and when you spoke 'Howdo' to him, he would not answer. He was an obia man. He would not take the hand of a white man. I have heard the men say there are others who are not glad that the white man has come so far, and that the gods have allowed it. . . . "

Abruptly he stopped. He had said more than he intended.

"I came to tell you about another thing," he continued after a moment of embarrassment. "You should know about fio-fio."

Fio-fio was a small brown bug, and it was also a spirit. [753] The spirit fio-fio brought sickness and death to human beings. For people like ourselves, untutored in the ways of the spirits, and the things which allowed them to gain sway over an individual, only a diviner could seek out the incident which had caused fio-fio to come.

751 783 That was why it was necessary to bathe in a protecting fluid, to "wash fio-fio," even though we had not yet been stricken.

"Let me tell you how to wash fio-fio," he went on. "You must bathe when nobody sees you, and this is what you must have: the skin of a plantain we call the mother plantain that has been dried in smoke, and weeds which I will give you, and Negro-country pepper which I have with me, and seven pieces of chalk, and some eggshells. Some people put washing-blue in the water, too, but that you don't need. You can bathe in it early in the morning, or at noon, or right after sundown, but no one must see you."

He paused for a moment.

776 626 578 "Do you not have fio-fio in your country? Look, this is how it is. You quarrel with a man who works for you, and he comes back and says he is sorry, and you say you are

sorry, too. He does that because he is afraid of fio-fio. If a 776
man quarrels with you, and he keeps his anger in him, and 626
you keep yours, and later he takes work from you, then 578
either he, or you, or both of you will get sick. If the anger was great, then you or he or both of you will become very sick. If you catch it soon, then you get together, and, as we say, '*Pu' mofo*'—take back what you had said. Then you get better."

Fio-fio had nothing to do with enmity. Honest enmity was not harmful. Enmity masked, however, or bitterness, or a grudge which a man harbored while he continued a relationship of friendship, sickened a man, and it sickened the man against whom the grudge was held, as well. That was fio-fio. Only those who had relationships of intimacy were subject to it—people who were united by blood ties, or ties of friendship, or servants who formed part of the household.

The remedy was ceremonially to retract and ask for [783]
pardon. It had to be done before people, with the proper ritual and bathing.

"If this isn't done, then a person gets worse and worse, and dies. I myself saw the fio-fio bug fly out of the nose of a dying woman."

This woman had sickened because she had quarreled with her sister over a man. In the end they had both lost him. As time went on, they began to talk again and later lived together in their mother's house. But they had never forgiven each other. One day one of them borrowed a kerchief from the other to wear at a dance. The next day she was ill. From then on she got worse and worse.

"The quarrel between the sisters had happened so long ago that they never thought of it. So they did nothing. In a month she died, and I myself saw the fio-fio bug fly out of her nose."

He knew another story about fio-fio.

"This happened to a man I know. His child died less than a month ago. He was living with a woman, and the woman became big with child. He had been away in the

776 bush for some months, and when he came back he did not
626 feel well, and they quarreled often. When they quarreled she
578 refused to cook for him, and so he said bad things to her.
He began to say the child was not his. Now when a father
[774] takes away his 'kra, his soul, from the child while it is in
the mother's womb, it is not good. When the child was
born, it was a very small child. Afterwards the man left
the woman. He still said the child was not his, but he used
to bring money to the woman sometimes to buy things for
the child. The neighbors said she must not take the money.
If she took it, they said, the child would die of fio-fio. But
the woman took the money. Nowadays many of them don't
believe in the old things, until they find out. When the
child was four months old it died. Everybody knew it was
fio-fio."

He told other incidents of what happened to people who had fio-fio.

"I tell you all this because sometimes the men in the
boats talk about the whites, and they think you don't
understand. But you know what they say, and you are
angry. If you give them a present of leaf tobacco later, or
rum, then they or you may become sick. . . . The men in
the bush know what to do about fio-fio, Massa, and you
must learn, too. The proverb says: 'How is a boat to go,
[538] if it has no paddles?'"

3

137 At the entrance to the village of S'ei a gigantic silk-
cotton tree stood. Its trunk was massive, and the roots
which projected outwards like so many buttresses made
824 of it a great somber cathedral. The curiously twisted
776 grooves which these buttresses made were said to house
many spirits, and particularly the three who lived in the
kankan tree, as the natives called it. Gedeonsu, the male
god, and Tinné, his wife, lived there with their child
Dyombie, the most dreaded of them all. The kankan tree
gods were thought of as women's gods, though a few men
might be found, here and there, who would, on occasion,

be possessed by them. Between the roots of the tree offer- 824
ings were placed—two or three bottles on their sides, or a 776
calabash filled with sacred clay.

When the time came to dance to the gods of the 824
kankan tree, a tunic of cotton was placed about its trunk.
While the drums spoke to the gods, white clay was spread 796
over the bark, a chicken was killed, and its blood allowed 776
to spray the tree and drip into a calabash placed on the ground to receive it. Eggs inside obia pots were put beside the tree, and bottles filled with sweet liquor and the juice of sugar cane. All about its wide trunk the dancers swayed and leaped, each dancing to her own spirit until, at the height of their ecstasy, there were a few among them who would climb the great tree itself, and dance on its branches. The drums continued until the frenzy ebbed. Had they stopped sooner, those in the tree could not have remained there safely or in safety have descended to the ground.

At other times, women came to Gedeonsu to ask him for [842]
children, and those who were troubled by his spirit brought
offerings, though the great dances were held when the [782]
old year came to an end, and the big offerings were then made.

"If a man were to cut down a kankan tree, Gedeonsu
would cut off his foot. I myself saw it happen," said a man [688]
to us at S'ei. "And his sister got the god."

The kankan tree gods could be bought, too. A woman who [842]
wanted fertility would seek to buy Gedeonsu. Others might [432]
wish to have Tinné. Only an individual who had a spirit
which gave him the right to make obias and call the gods 791
could get the spirit for one who wished to buy it. Such a 824
man would take an obia pot, fill it with water and place 776
inside it cowrie shells which had not been cleansed. After 796
speaking his invocation, he would add a sacred white stone, called an obia stone, and with a calabash in one hand and a bell in the other, he would go to the tree and address the spirits as he rang the bell. When the water became ruffled, it was a sign that the god had entered it. Quickly he would cover the calabash with a cloth and take it away with him.

796 This ritual might have brought Gedeonsu, or Tinné—
776 whoever was called. The two could not, however, be taken
824 at the same time, for one of them had to be left to care for
the child Dyombie. If two of the kankan tree gods were wanted, then mother and child, or father and child, would be sought.

824 "The kankan tree spirits are not bad, but people fear
776 them. They are not as bad as the Akatasi gods."

The Akatasi gods were those which animated the kato liana, and were related to the gods of the ant hill. This kato bush was a terrible parasite which, getting its strangle hold on a tree, would rise higher than the tree itself and at last kill it.

The silk-cotton, however, was a friendly tree and cruel only when its spirits were tampered with by those who did not know how to control the gods. When the ancestors came into this river, which "in early days was only a creek," it was they who had sought out these trees, and had made their villages where they stood. Now the trees had become great, and the villages were great.

Here was the silk-cotton tree at S'ei, one of the greatest of all. Its roots made ridges in the path to the village. Under the spiritual guard they spread, and to the large oval of wood fixed on a wooden base which stood a short distance from it, and to the low shelter where, on the head of a crudely carved image, rested a whitened covered pot, and farther to the mound of earth on which stood offerings. Farther still the roots followed the path, and into the village itself, until, perhaps half a mile from the tree, they reached the Kromanti house and the village council house and the home of the chief. It was as though these roots were the arteries which fed strength to the Kromanti spirits dwelling there, and as if they brought the wisdom of the ancestors to the shelter where the men of the village gathered to hear and try cases, to discuss the will of men and gods as they touched upon the well-being of the people.

344 Upon our arrival we were bidden to the council house, where men and women were waiting about. This was an

open shelter, covered by a gabled thatch. At both sides the eaves extended several feet from the posts which supported the roof, and almost touched the ground. The floor was of red clay, hardened and smooth. There were no stools about, and no other decorations. Men summoned to a council came with their own council benches. About two of the slender posts which faced the path were obias made of twined native sisal, of narrow strips of blue and red cotton, and cowrie shells. Each differed a little from the other, and each had its own potency, but what this was, none would say. On one of the crosspieces below the eaves were large balls of hardened red clay. They had been put there by the old women to await the time for molding the clay into the obia pots, which, after they had been fired, would be blackened with the soot of rice hulls and oil and refired. 344 [778]

Against the crossbeams in one corner of the council house the women had gathered, and at the other end the men were seated on their stools, with Captain And'u and the bassia, the man second in command, among them. While the men were discussing the Neng'e Nana, their Negro grandfathers from Africa, the women were addressing some direct questions to the white woman.

Why was she not smoking a pipe, as fitted the position of a woman of rank who was on her way to visit the Granman? What had she done with her children when she went on this long journey which took twenty-one nights and days to reach the Suriname white man's city? Did she like her husband's other wife? Had she more children than the other wife? What rank would her sons inherit from their uncles? 000

"How many gods have you?" one of the younger women asked.

"I have four—three Vodu, and one Apuku," another said, as though the question had been put to her, and she could say with pride that she had three snake gods, and one bush god. 776

The bassia's handsome wife, who had overheard the men speak of the white man's book which showed pictures of their ancestors, said, "The whites read out of books. The 776 186

776 gods do not come to them." There was in her voice con-
186 tempt for women who had no gods. She was of a reddish-brown color, taller and more slender than most, and the
great coils of brass about her arms and ankles told that her
[301] beauty had had full recognition. These had come to her at
[585] marriage, as had the small earrings of gold which the bassia had brought to her from French Guiana. With these, too, had come cloths and handkerchiefs, beads and carvings.

609 If white women had no gods, did they know any of the
123 other things which women must know? Did the white
[291] woman wear an apron underneath all her cloths, as women should? Were her thighs cicatrized? Did she cook for her husband, or other men, when she should be isolated in the special house provided for women's monthly visits?
[841] Did she purify herself with sacred clay when she emerged
from isolation in order not to spoil her husband's obias, for which contact with a woman who has her menses is the deadliest taboo? Why, having borne children, did her figure not show it?

[534] "Have you drums?" the bassia's wife asked. "Without drums, how do you pray? How do you dance?"

[535] Dancing without drums availed nothing.

"White women have no gods. The gods do not come to them. They are not troubled by the need to dance. White women do not pray," she concluded, seeing that what dancing the white woman did could only be a feeble affair.

"I will send my son to your country. The men who go to the French shore say it is good to know how to count the white man's way. My woman-child I will never send," she finished with finality.

Now it was the white woman's turn to ask a few questions, having done explaining how her boots laced, and why it was that she was dressed very much as her husband was dressed.

751 The white clay in the hair and on the face of a small
776 child was medicine. The child's mother had washed for her
783 god that morning. He was a god whose day for dancing was
Wednesday, and now, feeling the god stir in her, she would

wash every day until Wednesday came to permit her to 751
dance. When she washed with the sacred moistened clay, 776
she rubbed the white on her children. 783

"Will all the women dance on Wednesday who have the same god as you?"

The child's mother shook her head. "If the god comes to them, yes. If he doesn't come, they can't dance."

And the bassia's wife said, "The women who are in the 841
menstrual house can't dance. When they hear the drums, they are troubled, but they must remain quiet."

The woman had spoken too eagerly and too loudly, 593
for her husband, overhearing her, said something in a low rapid voice, and at once the women fell silent and several of them remembered errands they had to see to.

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"When men are in the council house, you mustn't 576
interrupt," said the bassia's wife to the white woman. [593]
"If we did what you did just now, our husbands would scold us when they got home, and if we did it again, they would beat us."

She had taken upon herself all the prerogatives of friendship, and continually criticized the manners of her visitor.

The old were to be greeted last. A gift was to be received by another. When returning a piece of carving to another's hand, the carving should rest on the outstretched palm, while the elbow of that arm lay on the palm of the other hand. In the presence of men, a woman who took a stool should turn it about and sit on its narrower side.

"Never sit on the bare earth. The spirits don't like it," she said one instant, and the next, "Don't play with your
fingers on top of your sun helmet. Your breasts will get [806]
long. Drumming is not a thing for women." [562]

There had been other warnings during earlier visits to Bush Negro villages, but none had borne down so heavily upon the shortcomings of the stranger.

A NIGHT AT S'EI

As we made a tour of the village, we discussed all this 778
with the chief and his bassia, and with the other men who 776
accompanied us. When we reached the open place sacred to the great gods, we stopped. The shrine was a fenced-in space, perhaps eight or nine feet long and almost as wide. Inside was a slender pole, with a head carved on its top, and a cotton tunic about its middle, and this was the wife of the Great God, the chief said. The ladder with the platform on it, on which stood a bottle, was the shrine of the great Sky God. At the base of the image with the tunic were several bottles, some white clay, and a few empty glasses, and everywhere were sticks with cloth on them, many with the cloth in tatters. Where the cotton had altogether rotted away, the stick alone remained.

"Let us go in," said the chief to the men.

With the chief came a young man whose hair was braided, 791
and who wore several obias on neck and arms. He was [302]
training to become an obia man. The bassia signaled us to follow, but the others remained outside.

The young man took up a bottle and poured some of its 782
contents into an earthen jar, and from the jar he poured out a libation to the Earth Mother. The captain prayed, explaining that we were white people on our way to the Granman, that he was leaving in the morning to notify the Granman of our approach. Would the gods take him and us in safety, and would they see to it that all we saw should be seen with the eyes of friendship? Then he prayed for a child in the village who was ill, and for his people, and for the clan of the Granman, the Matchau lo, and for his own family. After each prayer he paused, and those outside the paling clapped their hands and sang out, "Great thanks."

Before the chief's prayer was finished, an old man came [411]
by with a bush knife in his belt, and his gun. He was just then returning from the hunt, and he stopped to thank the great gods for the kill he had made. He spoke in a whisper, but his intonation was as conversational as the chief's had been.

A NIGHT AT S'EI

A girl of ten or eleven led the chorus. She had a string 535
about her waist, and the strip of cloth that was tied about 533
her neck as a ceremonial garment hung down cape fashion.
About her navel and on her face the cicatrized patterns
had been completed. Her voice was the shrill voice of a
child, and the answering chorus was as shrill.

"Chaka, chaka!" called the bassia who was directing 535
the dance. He was demanding those movements which
bring into play the muscles of the hips.

The women waited. They had come in all their finery,
their tunics of the newest cloth, their coils of brass brace- [301]
lets and anklets made to gleam by rubbing with sand, their
skins dark and glistening with the oil rubbed into them for [302]
the ceremonial occasion. Those whose hair was worn in
braids had redressed it that day. About their necks were
beads. Their cloths were fastened tightly about them, so
that their figures showed plainly.

The men, also in their best, waited with them. The iron 535
Kromanti obias on their upper arms fitted tightly, and 789
showed the great muscles above and below them. Those
who wore beads had two or three strands of yellow and
red intertwined, the small beads worn by men, small almost [301]
as okra seeds. One or two wore love obias—cowrie shells
sewed on a band of white cotton, and then dipped into [832]
water which was thickened with white clay. One or two
wore a small black bell-shaped obia—half the size of their
thumbs—on a black string, and with swagger had swung it
about so that it hung at the back. There were obias below
the knee, and obias which were great brass rings for the
big toe of the right foot. But one or two of the old men,
and the young man who was in training for an obia man,
wore a jaguar tooth on a string of native twining.

Drums . . . drums. Would there be drums? 535

The word was whispered from one to the other, and passed like a wave over the waiting figures.

But there would be no drums. This was the day when [776]
two gods might come. The god of the ant hill, for which
men and women might dance, and the buzzard god of the
men's Kromanti society.

344 352 to be admired for their artistry, but there also for ceremonial purposes which were never divulged. When one of these benches was later taken down to show the magic of paper which, placed on the top of a carving and rubbed with black crayon, reproduced the design beneath, the Granman looked startled, and then ordered that it be replaced. Nor were other rubbings allowed.

531 352 On both sides of these massed benches were many objects which could barely be distinguished in the half darkness of the house. There were guns and canisters, there were a few native brooms, and several wrapped parcels. [534] [778] There was also an apinti drum on which the gods were addressed. Not even at Ma'lobbi, where the chief, a famous carver, showed us many remarkable products of his art, did we see designs worked with the fine, sure lines or the beauty of individual motifs such as were traced on this apinti. The carving was in relief and covered the entire surface of the drum, which stood about three feet high, curving outwards from the top, and resting on a narrow circular base which raised its body about six inches from the ground. It was covered with a deerskin that use and exposure to the atmosphere had stained unevenly to shades of amber.

344 ● 776 532 Facing these carvings was the door which, itself of wood, swung on wooden hinges of native fashioning. In relief appeared the Earth Mother, and surrounding her were the symbols of fertility. No man, not even the Granman [695] himself, dared speak her name in this council house. At trials, when oaths were taken, she might be appealed to, but to call her idly would bring down her wrath on the Granman's clan, and, perhaps not stopping there, since the council house was of all the clans, she would revenge herself upon all the people of the Saramacca River. The carving was more beautiful than on the apinti which stood against the opposite wall. The greatest artist on the river had made it.

"That man had the gods, ya-hai," the men said, when we talked of the Granman's carvings.

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934

SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

643 "True, true, G'aman."

821 "Captain And'u, the gods sent the rain to cool every-
● 776 thing when the Bak'a came. The gods of the river carried
623 the Bak'a without mishap. We have heard of what the Bak'a has done. He has been at your country, at S'ei. He says he comes to learn. He says he does not come to buy wood or to work gold. What he says is good. Yet a full creek does not clear the bank of weeds. Tell us what the Bak'a did in your country, Captain And'u."

609 "The Bak'a came to S'ei. All that was there he looked
123 at. He walked about the village. His woman talked to our
623 women. The Bak'a spoke with our men. He asked about the obias in the krutu house. His woman asked our women about their gods. What was the name of the wife of the Gran Gadu, he wanted to know."

With every sentence, came the affirmation of the chief.

"So I know."

"So it is."

"By Ando!"

"So I heard."

And'u continued. "The Bak'a knows the land of the Negroes—*a sabi Afrika*. With him he has a great book. In it he has pictures."

"True, true."

"There are pictures of obias."

"Ya-hai!"

"There are pictures of the Kromanti houses."

"So it is!"

"There are pictures of people who have the gods."

"*Kweti-kweti*—No, no!"

"Yet pictures in S'ei the Bak'a did not make. The Bak'a said, 'If your ancestors tell you not to talk, do not talk. But when you talk, do not lie!' That which we did not wish to be done he would not do, his woman would not do."

"Gbolo!" exclaimed the Granman, "this is as I have heard. Now the Bak'a has come up the river. His woman has light hair, she is as our Toné people. The river has
[776] treated the Bak'a well. The gods of the river have let the
Bak'a pass.

Bak'a pass. Friends, the river is more than I am. . . . Let 609
us hear what the Bak'a has done on the river. Friend Kas- 123
anya, you have traveled with the Bak'a. Speak of what he 623
has done."

"It is as Captain And'u has said," Kasanya began, "what was forbidden, the Bak'a did not do."

The Granman interposed an objection.

"I sent a message to the Bak'a by the husband of my daughter. To him I said, speak to the Bak'a, say that at all villages on the Saramacca you will be received. But two villages have not walked well with the G'aman. At those you will not stop. Yet at one of them the Bak'a stopped."

"So it is, cunning master. This was how it happened. Darkness was falling. Everywhere was the big bush. A storm was on its way."

"So I know."

"There were no other villages near. The next one could only be reached after dark. There were bad rapids ahead."

"So I understand."

"The Bak'a woman was in the boat. To make camp before the storm came was not possible. We had a krutu. We spoke with the Bak'a. The Bak'a said we must go where we could find a roof."

The Granman grunted, was silent for a moment, then
took up the story. 623

"Friends, night overtook the white man in the bush. 891
He had a woman with him. The men said they could not 776
make camp at night. The white man took his woman to where there was shelter. Into the village he did not go. At the first house he slept. Early in the morning he left. He does not know the river. The men brought him at dark to the forbidden village. The gods sent a great wind when the Bak'a crossed the river to show their displeasure, but the Bak'a and his woman they did not harm. The gods took it into their hands. The gods are more than I am."

"So it is, G'aman." 609

"Friends, the children of the bush know what is done 623
in the bush. Yet a man's lips must speak for himself. Let 183

609 623 123 the Bak'a himself tell why he has come the long way to the Saramacca river and what it is he seeks."

There was a general chorus of agreement, and silence awaited our accounting.

As the town man began to repeat our words to the Granman, the quiet of the house was heightened by an occasional stirring outside the paling. From where we sat, we could see brown motionless feet, which told us that there were many more than those inside, who were listening to the white man's reason for being in the bush.

Again the Granman made the traditional responses.

"So it is, white man."

"True, what you have said, bassia."

Finally our telling was at an end. Again there was a silence as we sat, tensely waiting.

The Granman again broke the silence.

"Friends, chiefs, you have heard. The white man is here. He comes to learn of our life. The gods of the river have [776] [821] [823] brought him and his woman safely. The Great God sent the rain to cool the air when he reached Asindopo Lantiwe. The gods are more than I am. The river is more than I am. But the Saramacca people are also more than I am. It is you, headmen of the Saramacca people, who must speak."

"Ai, G'aman," said the man who had the stripes of white on him and who wore the many obias. "But have the ancestors spoken?"

"Truly you ask, friend," was the response. "It is well that you think of these things. In the bush, we think before we speak. Do you go aside and consider well."

[576] Slowly the members of the krutu arose from their benches. Softly, with bent form, each passed out of the doorway. We were alone with the Granman, who waited with us for the reply of the chiefs.

5

623 693 As the elders slowly filed out of the council house, it was as though a jury were leaving the courtroom to decide a case which had been laid before it. And as we learned more,

“*A naki apinti, ai!*—He is playing the apinti,” his father 856
said, laughing, and a woman who stood by said that when 533
he grew up he would have an important god. It would be a 868
good god, too, and it might be a great Komfo—a priest
reincarnated in him.

Among the little girls who were with us most often, and 857
now stood by with Yankuso’s grandson, were the two
daughters of Dida, the wife of Chief And’u of S’ei, who
went about the Granman’s village with white on her face
and body. The little girls were also washed in the white
clay, and there was white in the wool of their hair. They
had the quick, startled movements of their mother, and one
of them in particular was a nervous child, shy and easily
frightened. She never came too close to the strangers, and, [609]
for a time, if they but caught her eye, she would begin to
tremble with fear.

“Your daughters are handsome, Dida.” 776

“Ai, they come from a good line,” she said, laughing. 868

The Granman’s younger wife said, “They will have many
gods when they are big. They will have them from their [845]
mother, and theirs will be stronger yet. They are twins.”

It was possible, she explained, by looking at a child to know if it would have the gods of the family. Sometimes the gods took a dislike to a child and refused to give it of their wisdom or protection, and sometimes the gods liked it so well that they gave it many gifts—the gift of a fine singing voice, the ability to dance better than others, and the good fortune to be liked.

“Until they are grown, the gods do not trouble them much,” she added, “but we in the bush know a child who will have important gods, and we know if the gods will be kindly.”

“Do you mean you know because of kunu?”

“*Ma kye*, all gods do not come from kunu.”

4

One day when sitting among the women, the talk was of 845
twins.

"Before she begs the gods, she is seated on a mat, or on clothes. Over her head a white cloth is thrown. The woman who is there to look after the coming of the child takes a calabash with water. Then she throws the water on the ground where the woman is seated. She begs the great gods, and the ancestors, and the woman's soul, and the woman's gods. 844 789

"When the pains come, she ties a cloth about her belly tight, tight, until it hurts. The woman who helps her gives her some water if she wants it, and she presses down on the belly and makes the cloth tighter and tighter, until the child comes. The cord is cut with a knife." 844

The knife was the same as the kind they used for cicatrizing, and the after-birth was buried behind the house, in a small hole into which food and a piece of the sacred sangrafu wood was thrown. [412]

"The child is washed, and then *pemba*—kaolin—is put on its forehead, and after that the mother and the child bathe every day and then wash in pemba. Sometimes a moon comes and wanes, and another comes, and the mother still puts the white on herself and on her child." [751]

But if the birth proved to be difficult, then the husband was told, and he besought his own ancestors and his own gods to help his woman and child. 845

"If the child doesn't come, then it's a bad spirit. Then they call the obia man."

When a woman had difficulty, everybody was troubled about it. If a woman had been unfaithful to her husband and had not confessed it, it would be that which would be killing the child in her womb, and killing her as well. Sometimes it was *wisi*—black magic—and everybody wondered who had sent it to their village. Sometimes it was a god who was envious. [754]

"If it is a god, then, when the woman is strong again, she goes to a more powerful god and buys from him the next child to come into her womb. The strong god sees to it that the jealous one finds no way to harm the child." 845 776 842 [764]

What happened when a child was born dead?

845 766 The women had spoken with greater and greater reluctance about troubled births and now moved uneasily.

"You must not ask this," said Dida, rising. "Never talk about such things to young women."

Not until later, when Fenekonde and Tenemi were left alone with the white woman did they talk about birth customs again.

When a child died at birth, a hole was dug somewhere in the family quarter, or just outside it, and the child was buried there. There was no wake, no mourning. All those who had been living in the house where it died found other quarters, and for a month the house was washed with obia water. But if this had occurred before to the same mother, they would break the house where the child was born and would cast the pieces into the unhallowed bush. Some people on the river even broke it down at the first occurrence. There were never any wakes for very small children.

761 845 776 "Children die because they are bad spirits come in the form of a child. When they do not stay, we know it is a bad spirit. When the house is broken, they do not know their way to come again."

"What if a woman died?"

845 766 This was whispered so softly that only Fenekonde heard it, but she did not conceal her distaste for the question.

"When a woman dies she is put in a flat coffin. Some villages give her no coffin at all. Weeds are put into her eyes. All the girls in the village wash their eyes with obia weeds and water. They must never see this again. There is no wake. There is no dancing. No guns are shot. They break the house, and throw it after the coffin, as the men carry it away. She must not come back again."

But the white woman must not imagine that all deliveries were difficult. Often a woman bore a child, and, when the after-birth came, she herself rose and bathed and washed in pemba.

551 A child was given many names. Even in early childhood four or five names were not too many. There was the day

882 "Perhaps the women were wrong. She may not be a
891 woman yet."

"*Ma kye!*" Angita exclaimed. It seemed he knew better.

And there was the woman Amasina. She wore as many armlets and anklets of brass as the shy dancer, as many as the wife of the bassia of S'ei, whom the gods had prospered. Her cloths were of the finest, and in colors which were most often of yellow and blue stripes, with a thread of black interwoven, and another of twisted red and white. She was good-looking, but in her manner there was no smoldering challenge and no undue reserve. With ease she went from one group to another, and the women treated her neither with too much familiarity nor with restraint.

609 Amasina felt at ease, too, with the white people. In the bush they had an explanation for this feeling of well-being with strangers. If a man and a woman were both born on
581 the same day, they did not get on very well together, for they were both apt to have the same powers to grasp things which came within the province of the gods who also had come into the world on that day. Such a man and woman would at once perceive each other's mistakes or would be given to speaking continual warnings to each other. But there were days which were especially congenial affinities for marriages, and even friendships. These, we were led to see, were days which represented a male and female deity in the Bush Negro pantheon, whose mating had brought well-being to themselves and the living world.

"You and Amasina like each other, ai," they said in the village, and this friendship had a sequel of importance for us.

776 One late afternoon we were sitting with the women talking about the gods. Dida said the white on her body was for her god Kesekia. Chief And'u had washed her for her god when he was here in the village, and tomorrow she would dance. Kesekia, she said, was a Vodu god, who had come to her from the French shore. When he came to her, he spoke tongues; he knew French.

796 "Tomorrow they will play the agida drum, and I will put
776 a kerchief on my head tied so," she said, showing how she

would fasten it in back, letting the ends hang down, "and 996
I will tie my breasts with another." She took a proffered 776
kerchief, folded it into a triangle, and from the back brought the ends between her breasts and knotted them twice.

Amasina now joined us, and stood by listening.

They danced for Vodu gods on Sunday and Monday, and for the spirits of the bush on Tuesday and Wednesday. All the obia dances were held on Friday. All spirits had their special days, when they were worshiped and when they manifested themselves.

As we talked, each woman showed on her fingers how 776
many gods she had. Dida had two other Vodu gods. Three fingers, two, three, four—hands went up with pride, but what the names of the gods were, they would not say, for if they called the gods, they would come. It was well enough for Dida to talk, for having the god it was not she who was speaking, but the god himself. Very possibly he was deciding to come to the white woman, for that was what gods did if they chose. Intermingled with this banter was some concern for their visitor if the god should decide to come to her.

Faced with the opportunity of coming by a spirit, the visitor asked to be made wise in the ways of the gods. What was the name of the Earth Mother? And the Mother of the River? And of that very important snake god called Papa who came to women only, because only women gave birth to children?

Amasina, who had seated herself beside the white woman, leaned over, and calmly spoke.

"I will tell you. The Earth Mother is Asaase, and Hene Tonugbwe is the name of the Mother of the River, and Towenu is the Papa god. Now do not ask more, and never speak these names to any one, unless you get the god."

533 ing quality as it continued slowly and yet more slowly for a time, then quickened sharply at irregular intervals.

533 "Who is singing?"

●776 "The gods," said the woman at the fire, without pausing
[372] to look up as she fanned the small flame with a woven fiber fan.

"Whose gods?"

"Amasina's, and the god of a woman of the G'aman's family. She got back from the menstrual house last night, and this morning when Amasina got her god, she got one, too."

"May I go and listen to the singing?"

"Yes."

But before the white woman had walked ten paces, she came face to face with Bassia Anaisi.

"I am going to your quarter, Bassia. The woman at the fire said I might go and listen to the singing. Is it all right?"

"Yes, go."

In a few seconds she came to a house before which several women were gathered. Outside its doorway calabashes stood in a curving line across the entire stretch of front wall, some filled with a dark liquid and others with rice, while directly in front of the door itself a dark uncorked bottle had been placed.

Down several paths came women, each with a calabash in her hand, and each as she reached the line of calabashes placed hers beside the others, and went into the house. The women entered singly and remained there but an instant, emerging with lines of white over their arms and bodies. What had taken place in the house while they were there it was impossible to tell, for the singing had continued without interruption.

Two voices were heard now. The voice which had carried across the clearing still intoned the word "Ondyi," while the other chanted in a soft and beautiful voice words which came without pause or harshness, except for a strange hissing sound which issued from somewhere inside the house.

"May I come closer?"

THE GODS SPEAK

"Yes, move closer." 533

The white woman now went toward the open door, 776
and through it saw a little of the inside of the house. Like 342
all Bush Negro houses, it had no windows of any kind,
and what light there was came from this low open doorway.
Near the door sat the woman who belonged to the family of
the Granman. In her hand she held an egg-shaped piece 787
of clay which she rubbed between her hands to the rhythm 533
of her song, and at intervals lifted first one hand, then the
other, rubbing the white clay on her face and arms. The [302]
thin layer of white over the dark of her skin gave to her
appearance in the dark house a strange color. She swayed
on her low bench as she sang, her body curving from her
hips first to one side, then to the other.

"Ondyi, ondyi," she sang over and over, and with the quickening of voice, she called "bonsu."

This word "Ondyi," the women explained, when they 787
urged the stranger to greet the god as was fitting, was the
greeting of the deity, the god's way of saying their everyday word "Odi."

The eyes of the woman at the door were half-closed as she sang, and she seemed dispirited, though with the quickened swaying she did rouse herself for an instant. She had no kerchief on her head, and none about her breasts.

"Her god hasn't got her very hand," the women said. "Go inside, perhaps when you speak with him, he will begin to stir. They want you to come in."

Into the house the white woman brought her bench, and sat down close to the possessed woman at the door. When she became accustomed to the darkness of the house, she saw a pair of eyes fixed on her from the farthest wall. The figure against this wall was so much the color of the house itself that it was not until a few moments had passed that the crouching form of an old woman was distinguishable. The old woman sat motionless, her eyes fastened on the stranger.

The white woman freed herself from the intent stare 787
of the old woman against the wall only when a sudden 776

787 776 hissing sound so startled her that she faced quickly about. Now two other eyes met hers. They belonged to a figure on a low bench, seated with its back to the door, facing the darkness of the unbroken walls, but with head turned to watch the stranger. The figure was in white—tunic, cloths about the breasts and on the head, arms, throat, and body, all were white. But of a greater whiteness yet was the terrifying, macabre face in which the line of the mouth alone, and the living black of the eyes, showed. Beside this white figure stood a streaked glass tumbler, filled with a whitish liquid. This tumbler had been at the lips of the white form when the stranger turned to see where the hissing came from. Now that the glass was replaced, the whitened hands began kneading a piece of clay and rubbing face and throat and arms with the hands. While doing this, the body swayed and the voice chanted.

787
776
539

"From the river I come,
And I say to you all,
Greetings.
All you Negroes,
Be greeted.

From the river I come,
I say to the white woman,
Greetings.
I say you came as a friend,
I say you came not for evil.

From the river I come,
I say to you all,
Be greeted."

Now the first woman moved closer to the stranger and put her arms about her, streaking her with clay.

"Ondyi, Ondyi-o!
I am Affi
I am Kantamasi-o!
Ondyi, ondyi,

787
776
[539]

Woman, I care for you,
I will be your god."

There was consternation among the women who stood outside listening. The Akantamasu god was one of the strongest on the river. He ranked only slightly under the great obia spirits, which the Sky God when creating the world had sent as wisdom for the living to combat the capricious lesser gods, and humans who were dominated by evil spirits. Differing from the obia spirits, however, who befriended the living, and brought healing to them, the Akantamasu god was an avenger, surpassed alone by the yorka, the ghosts, who avenged by killing instantly when they chose, while the Akantamasu god killed more slowly.

But there was concern for the possessed woman, as well. She had spoken the name Affi, her day name, the name [551] which summoned her soul. When not in a state of possession, she would never have spoken it before a stranger, except in a whisper to an obia man who came to cure her, or to a diviner to whom she came to ask why her soul was troubled.

Presently the white figure rose, breaking the tension, and, chanting, went from the hut into the clearing. Affi and the white woman followed. In the light of the clearing, a faint resemblance could be seen in the grace of the body of the figure in white to the pleasant Amasina. Of the brown of her skin, only the ankles and feet showed.

Both of the possessed women began pacing back and forth in the clearing, in time to the rhythm of their songs, but while Amasina danced with an easy stride, Affi shook and quivered and moaned.

"When the gods come, we do not speak. We sing. The speech of the gods is song. So it is," one woman whispered. [533]

Another said, indicating Affi, "Her god troubles her. She gave you a strong god. Are you afraid?"

"When the god comes to you, you will speak tongues. Now you have two gods. When Kesekia comes to you, you will sing Kesekia songs, you will dance to him."

787 776 When a male snake god came, then it was easy to know, the women said. If the possessed one rolled face downward it was a male god, and he was courting the spirits of the earth, but if face upward then it was a female snake. "*Na muye opo-i-mbe gi 'a tapu*—The woman opens her womb for the sky," they said, using the precise image for one who was being wooed by the spirits who lived above.

3

123 When the white woman was about to enter the council house, Granman Yankuso called to her. He was standing in front of his house, surrounded by women, who were talking to him in low, excited voices.

"*Bak'a muye*—White woman," he said, looking at her searchingly, and saying nothing. "White woman," he repeated, after a short silence, "white mother, good morning. Are you awake?"

His voice sounded a little troubled, but not unfriendly. It helped the white woman to regain her self-possession.

"They sing well down below, Granman," she said, and went into the council house.

4

787 [123] Whatever Granman Yankuso thought of the white woman's having witnessed the possession of the women of his village, he did not refuse permission to her and her husband to return to the hut.

Amasina and Affi were still in the clearing, dancing to their own songs. Women came up with their children, bringing more and more calabashes of rice. Amasina took up each child in her arms, and caressed it gently, streaking it with the white clay as she did so, and singing the while,

[539] "*I come from the river.*
You shall be cooled,
You shall be well."

Affi's moaning had become more and more faint, and her pacing, by this time, was listless. Her god would not take

342 643 uninhabited. Its posts and walls and thatch were in excellent condition, and there was not even the weather-beaten appearance about it of a house which had been closed for some time. Nor had it the kandu, the spiritual lock of unoccupied houses.

778 346 To one side of this house was the open shrine to the great gods, the pole to the Sky God, the smaller one with a checked tunic across the middle of it for the Earth Mother. But there was also a figure of wood with a broad white cloth hung from it like a flag, and this, the villagers said, was the image of the Granman's father. When the dead man's spirit came to the village, it was this image he animated. In times of need and on days fixed by ritual, it was to this image that prayers and food were brought.

Some distance from this shrine, standing close to the uncleared bush, was a house that had been deserted. Half of it the great bush had already reclaimed. The thatch of the roof and one entire side wall had altogether disappeared, and in place of these were garlands of leafy vines, so closely interwoven and so brilliantly green in the sun as to give to the asymmetrical mass of weathered grayish palm, and the strangling green, a strange beauty. Not quite two years ago it had been abandoned, and soon it would be completely lost to the bush.

But the villagers looked the other way when we photographed it.

A little to one side of the house with the doorposts which
showed the Granman's crests was a smaller hut, before
[789] whose door stretched a magic azang of palm fronds that
marked it as a shrine.

"This house is for the Apuku gods," said an old woman
● [776] who heard our inquiry. "It belongs to me. It was built
when my god told me to make it."

And without hesitation she led the way under the palm fronds through the opening.

This was the first time we had been permitted to enter a closed shrine. We had had descriptions of shrines from men with whom we had talked of the gods. There were some, 778 346 of earth which filled the rest of the hut. In the left-hand corner was a covered whitened vessel for the god called Kentina Dagowe. This Kentina Dagowe was a deity who was the offspring of the Dagowe snake, and the Apuku god 776 778 of the bush whose name was Kentina. In him, as in so many other of the spirits, we found exemplified the Bush Negro's concept of the world which held that the gods mated as did humans, that all which stirred and had life came into [773] being by such matings.

Other spirits also came to this house, the woman went on. Mundewaya, another of the bush gods, was worshiped at the white-covered pot in the opposite corner, while beside it lay the vessel to which the spirit of a third might come. This one was the most powerful of all bush gods, and his name was Danhowao. There were other objects on the platform. Two stools, daubed with sacred clay, had their place there, and in the center was an image of wood, a rounded pot set on a base that tapered from the ground toward it, and this was to the Nanai, the ancestors.

The old woman said, "For the Apuku gods, we only play the tumao drum. The Apuku are mostly women's gods, but some men have them, and the men who have them play the drums. When the god comes to you, then if you are not [888] too old you dance. But we old women do not dance. When the god comes to me, then I begin to shake. I go into this house on the day we call him, and they play the drum. Then I talk to the god. If I have something to beg of him for myself, or for someone else, then I put the pot which [787] belongs to him on my head, and the drum calls him. When my body begins to shake, then it is the god. He has come, and when I speak it is not I but the god speaking."

776 609 From the clearing the talk of those who had remained outside came through the thin woven walls of the shrine. [203] From one to another we could hear the news spread that in the village of the Granman across the river the gods had spoken for the whites.

In the hut, we listened to the old woman inside whose shrine we stood.

"The openings in the wall there," she explained, when 778
we asked her about the two squares cut into the wall 346
behind the altar, "are for all things that fly. In this place
they must come and go as they like. Bats come here, and [825]
insects of all kinds, and when they want to go back to the
bush, they must be able to go as they like. That is the wish
of the gods. So they told us long ago."

6

We were led from house to house. The gods had spoken. 574
We were friends, and as friends who came not to harm, we 609
were given the hospitality of friendship. There were other 123
shrines, but we did not have to ask about them. They were
pointed out to us with the other sights of the village.

The closed low hut near the Apuku shrine we had entered 778
was to the river god Toné. It was a very small enclosure, 776
and before it was a plant which covered the low entrance. 346
It belonged, we were told, to an albino woman who was
possessed by Toné. But she was not in the village now.
Farther down the path was a larger house, another shrine.
This had a piece of iron over the door and, when we asked
about it, the girls who were following us ran, and the men
merely said that it was the place of the Kromanti obia and
passed on.

As we continued on our way, each woman was anxious 352
not to have us slight the house her man had built her or 353
fail to admire the carvings that were inserted into the weave
of the palm walls. The huts were swept clean—the clean-
liness of the entire village was even more striking than that [356]
of others we had visited—and but for a few stools, which
were brought out for the strangers while they spoke with
the old people who lived in the quarter, they were entirely 353
bare. In every house, however, there was sure to be a shelf, 531
large or small, or several shelves, on which stood prized
food trays with carvings which covered both inner and outer 415
surfaces. Combs and food stirrers were taken down and
shown us, and the calabash dishes made by the women

353 themselves, and the blade-like pieces of gourd which they
531 used for spoons, and which bore the same symbols as the
415 dishes.

"Our men make fine things here in the true, true
462 Saramacca," Dida said when we entered her quarter, and
531 sat in her house. "Look at the carvings I have."

Her body was still white with pemba. Her manner was still a little vague.

"Did you dance this morning?"

"Ai."

"We heard the agida drum play when we were in the
776 council house of the Granman."

787 "Ai, Kesekia is a big god. When he comes, his voice is strong."

But she showed no willingness to talk, and we could tell by the repeated twitching of her body that she had still to dance to her god. Leaving her we continued up the path toward houses we had not yet visited. The white man, with a man who was guiding him and the bassia from Asindopo Lantiwe, walked ahead, while the children crowded about the white woman who was giving them safety pins which they at once put in their hair.

778 "There is the Vodu house," said the man who acted as
guide, and he led the way through the low doorway into
346 the hut.

Inside, though smaller than the shrine to the gods of the bush, it differed from it but little. It had the same clay floor, the same raised altar on which stood stools washed in white clay, and several covered, whitened vessels, an image, and the round balls of clay.

"May I go closer and look at the image there?"

"Yes, go."

[352] The stools resembled those in ordinary use, but whatever
design they may have had was obscured by the white clay
which covered them. The vessels were not unlike those in
[415] the other shrine we had visited or those which rested on the
heads of village gods which stood under low, roofed-over
shelters on the main village paths. Turning, the white man

stepped from the raised platform ready to leave, when he noticed a drum which stood in a corner near the door of the hut, and reached almost to the thatch. 778 346

We had seen many agida drums during our stay in the Saramacca country. Some of them had been half as tall as a man—a round hollowed trunk of a tree, with wooden pegs in the side on which the drumhead was fastened. The agida had no elaborate tuning device such as the other drums carried, and on it was neither the beautiful carving with which the apinti was decorated, nor the white pembadoti of the tumao. The agida was the deep bass voice of every trio of drums which played for the sacred dances, and whatever other rhythms were struck on it, its steady note set the beat about which the more incidental rhythms played. We had been told what seemed fabulous tales of the size of some of these agida drums, but not until we saw the drum which stood in the corner of this shrine to the snake gods did we realize how large they might be. 778 534

The white man glanced about him. The rest of the party had not yet caught up. In the dimness of the shrine there were only the three men. He stepped up to the enormous drum.

"May I tap it?" he asked.

Reaching up, his arm outstretched above his head, he stood on tip-toe before his fingers found the taut head and gently drummed a rhythm there.

"It is large. It must have a deep voice."

"It is a big drum. Would you like to hear it? The man who plays it is near by."

Now there were four in the hut. The drummer spoke.

"Do you want to hear the drum, white man? I will play it if you are not afraid. But if I play, I will call the god, and when I call him he will come. Shall I play the drum?" 778 533 776

The white man asked that the god be called.

The bassia beckoned to the white woman to come, and signed to the others to remain outside. Framed in the low doorway, shutting out the glare of the sun-swept clearing, were the crouching bodies of women and children who

778 peered into the inner darkness, the whites of their eyes
533 moving with the movements of the strangers.

Gently the drummer laid the great cylinder of wood flat
● 776 on the ground, and from the thatch took down a hard-wood stick, dark and smooth with use. The drum filled more than half of the wall near which it lay. Stooping, the drummer began to call the Vodu gods. It was the rhythm we had heard from across the river early in the morning. The drumming had sounded low and distant then, but in this small enclosure the volume of sound was deafening. It seemed to be pushing against the yielding woven walls, pushing outwards and up.

The rhythm was disturbingly irregular. There was, in the sense of the steady rhythms of the dances, no rhythm at all, and this uncertainty of beat added to the volume of sound racked the listeners. When we thought we heard a repetition of an interval, a sudden change in tempo brought us up with a start. On and on the man struck the drumhead, sounding the heavy beats with the stick, while with his free hand he kept up a running fire of obbligato to the message for the god.

The heads in the doorway began to move nervously this way and that as the message to the god continued, when suddenly they disappeared behind someone who was coming at a run. A moment later Dida was in the hut.

787 She was again possessed. Her body shook with the intensity with which she experienced her god, and her eyes glowed with a steady fire. Back and forth she paced, and when the drum had sounded, she addressed herself to it, listening for its voice and answering, listening again and answering in tones which grew more and more harsh. Then she turned to us, and began to chant

"*I am the god Kesekia*
[539] *From back of the prison,*
From the French shore,
I come.
I am the god Kesekia."

787
539
[533]

Tutu calls, ye-o.
God is there in the river alone,
God Tutu calls,
Ye-o, yo."

787 So the young woman sang as she paced, her body twitching and quivering, while Dida repeated her exclamations. The man again took up his invocation to the gods, then resumed the soft tapping against the wood.

He said to us as he tapped, "My own god is Agida Wenowa. She is a Vodu god, and when I dance I put a parrot feather in my hair. When I play the agida, then all Vodu gods come. The agida is the drum for the Vodu gods."

As he spoke to the slow beating, yet two more figures came crowding in. We had been so intent on the two possessed women and on what the drummer was telling that, not until these new arrivals were at our side, did we notice them. One of them was Affi, the other Amasina. They were as we had left them, Amasina still in her white tunic and kerchiefs, her face and upper body yet more thickly coated with white so that only the eyes were alive, Affi still a grayish color, still anguished.

"We heard the voice of the god. We came."

But there was no longer room in the small shrine for the women to dance. The beating of the stick became fainter and fainter; the drummer no longer touched the skin which topped the drum. Fainter and fainter still came the beat, until the young woman who stood there without white on her body shook herself, as though she were coming awake. For a moment, all was quiet.

"He is gone."

"The god is gone."

"He has released her."

The drummer put back his stick. Slowly he lifted the drum; gently he stood the agida upright in its corner.

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In the Granman's council house, voices of people standing outside reached us. From one to another the news was told.

THE GODS SPEAK

The gods of the river had carried the whites in safety up the rapids, and the gods of the sky had, at the moment of their landing, brought rain to cool the earth and sent thunder to speak the greetings from on high. This morning a great snake deity and the god of the ant hill had declared that the strangers carried no evil for the people of the Saramacca. Across the river they had been in the shrines, and the great agida had spoken. They had not been harmed, even though strong Vodu gods had come. 776 609

Inside the hut, we listened. We did not know the decision of the Granman's krutu, but the gods had spoken. This day, in any event, could not be changed.

643 159 In our own terms, if we were to picture the Granman as a splendid savage, cheerful, guileless, childlike, flattered by our interest, we would be belying his gifts of sophistication, and he would thank us little for these romantic outlines which, according to the values of his own civilization, would be insulting.

829 538 776 The code of life among these people was expressed in the proverb we had heard often spoken. "There are men on the upper river, there are men on the lower river, too." For survival in this bush, a man needed to match his strength and his wits and his magic, his kindliness and his enmity against those of any other. And the Bush Negro is a realist, for, as we had seen, not even the gods could be depended upon to be consistent—consistently good or consistently evil. The Bush Negro's gods, like humans, often did things for unaccountable reasons, because of a momentary whim, because of a desire to try the untried.

829 181 It was good to be guileless, but sometimes a man had to be a tiger, had to stalk his prey from behind. It was well enough to be a tiger, but sometimes a man needed the cunning of the bush hero, spider Anansi, who knew how to outwit the tiger. It was well enough to be an eagle, and be free and fly high, but sometimes a man needed the wit of the little bird konubri, who became king of all birds, because, when in the kingdom of birds there was a contest for the throne, it was he who, by perching on the back of the eagle, flew highest of all.

643 159 In the simplest of our own terms, Granman Moana Yankuso could be said to be a superb politician. In his villages, marriage alliances were calculated with the nicety of the best statesmanship. Whatever his own views, he saw to it that he never defied the arbiters of magic or the clan of the seat of magic, the Dahomey people. Toward the women of strange villages who came to see the white man and his woman, he showed an easy gallantry, which could not have been but flattering. When addressing the women who carried children astride their backs, he would speak gently to them and call them "mother" in greeting, and

touched the palms of our hands, and struck against the 123
calves three times. 782

"This is obia," he said simply, and when he was finished, 789
he went out.

Our cook knew this obia. It was Opete obia, medicine 574
bearing the name of the sacred buzzard. It was given us that 609
we might have a good journey down the river.

"Did you see how he was careful to touch the eyes?"
our cook pointed out to us. "The Opete gets the eyes when [776]
it comes to a person, just like Kromanti goes into the head,
and Vodu into the belly."

When we went out for a moment, and walked toward our storeroom, we saw the Granman splash water out of a calabash onto the floor and front wall of the house which held our supplies. Was it that our belongings might be safe on our journey down? It was no time for questions, and we asked none.

Women and children again came crowding about the
white woman. Though they had been warned not to talk,
there was still something of the warm feeling of earlier
times which a command did not entirely destroy. Then, 123
too, the order was that the sendoff was to lack no formality. 231
As we stood there, a dog came running down the path. He 782
was on his way to the river. In his mouth was a large ball of
something which had been thoroughly charred. It was an
offering to the river spirits, perhaps. It might have been less
pleasant magic. He had been sent by men who were busy in
the ancestral shrine.

When the white woman called attention to the dog, and asked what he held, the women recoiled with amazement that she should have seen the dog at all. Part of the magic might have been, as it was in some formulas we recorded, that he was to pass by invisible to the strangers. But this is conjecture. . . .

The moment before we went down the path to the river, 123
Amasina came up alone, and gave us her hand. She was 609
gracious, and completely at her ease. Whatever was said,
she had faith in her god Towenu, who had vouched for our
friendship.

BAYO, THE PLAYBOY

"Will Bayo be married before we leave the bush?" we 115
asked, telling her that only a short time would see us returning to our own country.

We had often talked of marriage with Bayo on our trip up river and had offered to make up what he lacked in gifts and money that we might witness the festivities of marriage. He had, of course, promised to have matters arranged.

Bayo's aunt laughed, however, when she heard the question, and turned to the other woman who was with us in the dimly lighted hut.

"Did you hear what the white man asks?" she called 584
out to her companion. "White man, let me tell you some- 115
thing. Bayo is a long way from marrying yet. Why, his girl's breasts haven't begun to come yet!"

It seemed that Bayo had also to see to many things before he could marry. He had not yet cut the field for his mother-in-law, nor had he made any of the carvings which he needed to give his betrothed and her mother, for Bayo was a poor carver.

"Bayo has cunning in his eyes, and his head, but his 115
fingers have no cunning, Bak'a. . . . But you know this, Bayo is strong."

Her train of thought turned at the last phrase to our journey up river. Had we traveled well with Bayo? Had he got on with the other men? Awa, she knew that people liked him. It was the obia he had, and his own gods, but his gods were bad, too.

"When he was in his mother's womb, he troubled her [843]
much. He tore at her. Ai, she had no happy time of it with Bayo."

We remembered the incest kunu in Bayo's family, which 684
lay in wait for all its members, killing off one by one until 776
the line was wiped out. We ventured a cautious question.

"You are the sister of Bayo's mother?"

The answer, however, did not take us to kunu, but rather 115
to the iron on her arm. 776

"Ai, and of his father who is now dead. In our family we 789
have strong gods. It is these that have come to Bayo. . . ."

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789
"So we see from the Kromanti obia on your arm." Was she, a woman, possessed of the war-like Kromanti spirit? we asked her.

"It is as you see. I am a woman, and I have Kromanti—and it's strong Kromanti."

"We had not heard of women your age getting Kromanti."

"Ai, there are not many, but when my spirit comes, I dance heavy. I dance like the men."

We must have appeared unconvinced, for she became more emphatic.

"What they do in other villages, white man, I do not know. But I have Kromanti, and when the drums speak here at Djamungo I, too, come."

She rose and went into the inner chamber of the house, where the hammocks were hung, and brought out several objects wrapped in old cloth.

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"Bayo said I should have obias for you when you came. He said you would pay well for obias. I have these for you."

The trading commenced. There were two small images—"*gadus*" they were called, both crudely carved. One was called Winti Nyamusi. It was a spirit which gave children to women.

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"When I come to ask for children, then I take sweet rum in my mouth, and I spray the gadu, then I say, '*Naymusi, da wa' buno mi'i*—O Spirit Naymusi! Give me a fine child.' Then the child will come."

What was the other image, the larger one, with anteater's bristles inserted at sides and top?

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"That is a Kromanti obia. It is the Opete spirit, the buzzard. When you take it with you, you must speak to it so. You must say, 'Obia-o, I am carrying you away with me. You must look after me, you must see that my life is spared, O great spirit.' Then you must spray it with rum, but not the sweet rum, not for Kromanti."

789
There were other obias she had for us, some to be worn about the neck, and others to be worn below the knee.

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[534] *"You have come to go, come to go far, come to go far to bring the wood to the water. But it is long, it is far, to the river. Thank you, friends."*

Then the song was taken up by the workers and, with each rhythmic measure, the great piece of lumber went farther through the jungle on its way to the river. When he had chanted for us the greeting to the men, Bayo began to sing a song relating to men's casual exploits with women and, as he finished the song, he laughed. [831] "White man, if you came with us, you would hear what songs the men make up about women!"

3

126 The phonograph had delighted Bayo from the first. When Apanto had summoned the spirit of his obia to fight the machine, Bayo had watched. When the white man's glue had repaired the broken belt, and the hot sun had made the machine "walk" once more, Bayo had approved.

"The machine is not weak," he had said. "I will sing for it."

And sing for it he did.

But the curse of Apanto still troubled the machine, for up the river and down there had been difficulty with it. Often when there was a particularly good song to be recorded, the belt would give, the machine would fail the white man. The story of the prowess of Apanto had gone up the river with the Gankwe paddlers, and when the machine stopped, heads nodded, and we would catch the word "obia" among the murmurs of the bystanders.

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776 Bayo thought, it seemed, that the machine's proud spirit was by this time properly chastened and, since twice the machine had refused to work while he was singing into it, twice had made him stop the song and its drum accompaniment, he decided to take matters into his own hands.

"White man," said Bayo, shortly after our return from up the river, "I will help the spirit of the machine. I will call the great gods. Apanto's spirit is strong, but Bayo has strong gods, too." 126 123

The machine was made ready for him, and Bayo sat down on a convenient box, his head bent over the tumao drum which we had acquired and which his fingers could scarce ever be near but that they played on it. 782 776

"It is not the right drum," he said. "You should have an apinti for me to speak to the gods. But I will try it with this one. Tomorrow I will go up the river to Djamungo. I know a man who has an apinti. You will give me money, and I will buy it for you. But now I will speak on the tumao."

He began the irregular tapping which we had learned to identify as the drum language. With one hand he carried the message, while with the other he played irrelevant motifs which served to confound anyone not initiated and leave him, as it left us, who had worked out some of the general principles on which this drum language was based, utterly unable to interpret it or to tell which were the significant elements. 802 534 782

"The great gods will look after your machine now, if they will listen to the tumao." [776]

The next day Bayo went upstream to get us the apinti we so desired. He was not successful, but the gods had listened to him, when he had invoked them on the tumao, for Bayo's ministrations ended all trouble with our recalcitrant phonograph. Bayo indeed had strong spirits! 126 782 776 177

As the days went on, and record after record was put on the turntable, and with its tracing of songs, or examples of Bush Negro speech, or fragments of the rhythms that called the various gods, was taken off and carefully put into its felt-lined box, Bayo visibly swelled with pride. This was his doing! With his strong spirits he had called the great gods! He was young, and he had not spoken on the proper drum, but they had listened to him! So his thoughts went, and so he would repeat them to us.

His interest in the phonograph was intensified the more he saw of it, and he sang and spoke and drummed, either

126 alone or with some friend, into the wax cylinders that
782 spoke back in such mysterious fashion. When Apanto came
776 to visit us, Bayo smiled as he saw the obia man approaching
177 from the landing place.

"His obia is strong, but mine is strong, too. Let him sing into the machine."

Apanto was visibly surprised when he saw in operation the machine his spirit had wrecked. "The machine is not weak, Apanto," we assured him. "It has its own strength, and now it has the strength your gods have given it. For in the true, true Saramacca, a great obia man spoke his message to the Great God into it, and since then it has walked well with us."

Out of the corners of our eyes, we could see Bayo's pride.

126 "Sing for us, Apanto," we urged, for he had a beautiful
533 voice. "Sing us an Apuku song."

Now Apanto sang, not once, but many times. It is true that when we asked for Apuku he sang Vodu, and when we asked for Vodu he sang Toné, and when we asked for Toné he sang Kromanti songs, and when we asked for Kromanti he sang the sacred dirges called "Papa" songs. Yet this was not otherwise than might be expected, and it was not too difficult to play the records to interested men of other villages, whose startled comments would soon tell us the kind of song he had sung.

It was another day when Apanto again sang, and some of these who had witnessed his first victory were about. One such addressed himself to Bayo, who was sitting near.

"Apanto's spirit fought the machine, and stopped it.
[776] But the machine works and sings back to Apanto. Its strength has come back to it."

"Awa, Apanto's spirit is strong," we heard Bayo reply, "but there are other strong spirits on the Saramacca."

4

302 Bayo had spent the night at Gankwe, and had returned
115 resplendent with a new hairdressing. We joked with

she doesn't make children, then he can send her back. But most often it is the woman who goes away." 586

When the wife left the home her husband had built for her and went to her family, he had to go to her village and plead for her return, while her relations berated him soundly for his behavior toward their kin. If he had not mistreated her badly, the family would urge her to return to him, and so great would that pressure be that she would have to go. But Bayo again repeated that this did not happen often. If a woman left her husband and he failed to come for her, they were divorced. She could not remarry [587] until three months had passed.

But Bayo was more interested in marriage than in divorce, and the talk again turned to his betrothal. 584 115

His mother and her brothers had decided upon the match. His uncles had gone to the family of the girl, and talked with her mother's brothers. Her people called a family krutu to decide whether Bayo was qualified to be a suitable husband for this young member of their family.

"Were you there?"

"No. It was a krutu of her family. But I know how they talk at these krutu, for when my sister was promised in marriage my own family had a krutu, and I sat and listened. 584 115 623
Anybody who knew anything bad about my brother-in-law or his family told of it. They talk much at these krutu. The woman you met at Djamungo talked when the men talked, and she talked when the women talked," he finished with a laugh, as though it were a relief to him to know that at least she had had no say when his girl's family had gathered to look into his own family position, and his personal habits of work, and the gifts the gods had given him.

At this krutu of the girl's family, Bayo had, however, been thoroughly discussed. Was he a good worker? Could he hunt well? How did he behave in strange villages? At his initiation had the gods come strong to him? Had he done anything that his wife's family would later be ashamed of? 776●

The white man wondered about the kunu which hung over Bayo's family, the kunu of incest, the deadliest of all

716 kunu, which must kill his children. Was it safe to mention it? A chance question was asked.

"Nothing will happen to my children, Bak'a. They will [604] belong to my wife's family. It is my sister's children that things will happen to."

Bayo paused for a moment on the path, and stood in thought. Was it that he wished to be entirely honest with his friend? Was it that to confess the truth was too difficult for him? Whatever the reason, his next remark indicated a compromise.

"Nothing will happen to my children. Those of my younger brother will die, but not mine."

584 The conversation came back to the less painful subject of betrothal. Whatever the reason for accepting this boy whose kunu brought such supernatural risk, the match had apparently been satisfactory to the family of the girl, and they had sent word that the marriage would not displease them.

"Now I am earning the money I need, and later I will make the things I must give my girl and her family."

583 There was, first of all, the work to be done for Bayo's prospective mother-in-law. He might have to help her with repairs on her house, or assist her in clearing a field. Before he was married he would have to go into the bush and cut the two fields for his wife, one for rice and one for cassava, which a married woman must have, and in addition he would have to cut an extra field for the mother of his wife.

"I must do it so they can be sure that I am strong, and can take care of their girl when I marry her. But I will not have any trouble!"

Before that, however, Bayo would have to see to the carvings which a man had to have for marrying.

"I do not like to carve. But I have friends who will [439] carve for me while I go hunting for them!" That was the way to solve such difficulties. When the carvings were assembled he would have to make a boat for his girl. Bayo was not yet certain, but he thought that another boat would have to be made for his mother-in-law. Then

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

789 776 This, he went on to explain, had the meaning that obia was not so great as the very great gods, and it was not to be ranked with the lesser deities who served as emissaries for the great gods, yet when the great gods wanted to help mankind, it was through obia that they healed and purified, it was to obia that men were instructed to turn.

773 776 It seems that when the Sky God created the Earth Mother and the Mother of the River, he also created man and beast. Man had a poor time of it, pitting himself against the forces of earth and sky and water. And so that man might survive, the Sky God had had to send obia into the world to help man. Obia was not a god, it was a spirit. It gave people knowledge of herbs which cured, and herbs which prevented sickness. Obia warned of danger, and made known those properties of earth and water and air which healed and calmed. 787 784 Obia taught the use of the band of metal on the arm, or the string about the waist which forewarned of evil, and made man wary and alert.

After obia came into the world, the Sky God sent Akantamasu, the god of the ant hill, to plague man. Perhaps obia had made of man an overbearing creature, defiant even against the great gods, so that the Sky God brought the Akantamasu spirit into being to teach him humility.

The answer of the Bush Negro was, of course, that so it was, and so it had been long ago, but why, he did not know. The Sky God had willed it so, and the Sky God was so far from man that he never vouchsafed explanations to human beings, and they in turn rarely taxed him to ease their bewilderment.

769 775 776 There was also the power of the ancestors, but our Bush Negro friends were never certain as to how they ranked in the supernatural hierarchy. Some said they ranked after the Earth Mother and the Mother of the River, that they were greater than obia, because the ancestors punished as well as helped mankind, and when angered their punishment came swifter than that of the powerful Akantamasu gods. Others said the ancestors were greater than obia, because obia had been given to the ancestors long ago,

and it was they who in dream or vision, or in a state of 769
possession, instructed living men in the ways of yet greater [787]
and greater obia. But there were those who held that obia 775
ranked after the greatest of the deities, that obia surpassed 776
the power of the ancestors, for obia knew how to make "*yorka tapu*"—preventives against troublesome ghosts, and obia men could summon the dead to enter the body of a living man to make revelations.

Whatever the position of obia in the supernatural world, its place on earth was to serve man, for of all living beings, man alone knew obia.

2

What were the manifestations of obia in the life of the 789
Bush Negro as we found them? 778

A black pot with its magic powers was an obia pot, the [415]
charm worn about the neck was called an obia, the medicines we gave the natives for their eyes or their cuts were called
white man's obia, and their own mixture of weeds steeped [278]
in water, which stood in the burning sun gathering a green scum until it should be ready for use, was also obia. Young Yamati who had danced susa for us did not have a cord about his neck, but, he had assured us, he had obia for
long life as did his partner Sabape, though his own could [304]
not be seen, since it consisted of several obia cuts made shortly after birth, which served instead of the cord. The strings about the waists of children were obias. The slight cuts to be noticed on men's arms, on thighs, below the knee, below the shoulder blades were obia cuts, too.

Nor was that all.

Bayo had said to us, "When obia comes a man does 776
bad things. He destroys. When mine comes, it is ugly 789
sometimes."

It was obia, too—Apanto's obia—which had stopped our phonograph, and obia again, invoked this time by Bayo, which had strengthened the spirit of the machine.

We talked about obia to an elder, a village head, from one of the down-river settlements, which was not, however,

776 important enough to be the residence of a clan chief. His
789 clan's magic was strong, and, being well past middle age, he could afford to speak of these matters with the whites, for like all Bush Negroes he was proud of the black man's obia.

"Ya-hai, white man, obia may well puzzle you. It is no small matter. No man knows all there is to know about obia. The greatest of obia men is never done learning. You
[791] say you spent more than twenty years learning your kind of work. Twenty years is nothing. All his life an obia man spends learning. The ancestors let him see a little at a time, and a little more. 'One step at a time,' as the G'ama' says. So it is, white man."

When did the learning begin, we asked him?

869 "In the bush here, children see what we do, and they
776 learn much by watching. They learn to recognize the kind
778 of obias a man wears, they learn to know the names of obias, and about the *tchina*—taboos—that go with the wearing of obias. That is the beginning." All children knew that, but only boys could aspire to learn the secrets of obia.

A boy's definite training in these things began with adolescence. The ceremony was not formal, for it concerned only the boy and his immediate relatives. When the time came to teach the novice about the gods, his father and
[604] his mother's brothers met with him, and they held a krutu. Other men also came, men of the village and elders of their great family. The outsiders sat by and said nothing, while
881 the instruction was carried on by the father and the boy's maternal uncles.

869 "First the father gives him his gods, and he tells his son
776 the name of each god and how he must serve him."

There were songs to be learned and dances and invocations; there were the offerings which had to be made, and the manner of prayer memorized. He was told when he might call on the god and what names the god bore, for each god had several names, just as had each human being. There were many names to learn for the gods—their day names, their "strong" names.

So it was with each god, until the boy was ready to be 881
initiated into the Kromanti Society. 869

"There are many, many krutu, white man, for a boy has 776
much to learn."

When those who directed the krutu were satisfied that the boy had learned how to serve the gods he had been given, that he knew their powers, and those things which were hateful to them and would incur their displeasure, then a dance was held for him so that he might demonstrate before the assembled festive villagers that he was ready for manhood.

"We give a big play for a boy who gets his gods for the first time. When the gods come to him at this dance at the bidding of the drum, and he dances hard, then his family is pleased. When a boy dances, then we know what is in him. We know whether his gods are strong, whether he is to be feared."

Once the father had transferred his gods to his son, he 886
did not dance much himself. He might continue to play the 869
drum at sacred dances, but dancing and drumming were 776
for the younger men. His son's worship of the gods through [535]
the dance released the father for the study of obia. With [533]
the governing elders, the father took up his rôle as a clan member who sought the will of the ancestors when new tasks were to be undertaken.

"What happens if the father has few gods to give his son?" we asked.

"Then his mother's eldest brother gives his to the boy." [604]

"What if the boy's uncle has none to give?"

That happened so seldom that he could not remember such an instance, but he had heard it said that this had occurred once or twice.

"A man must have gods to help him live. If his family 432
can give him none, then they buy gods for him. Sometimes 776
there are gods in the family that are not too strong, and 424
they want the boy to have strong gods. They go to a man who knows about such things and who himself has strong gods and buy a god for the boy from him."

776 A man who wished to buy a god for his son went to a
432 renowned obia man and agreed to pay him a certain sum
424 of money if, at the end of the period of training, the god
came to the boy.

"When the obia man says the boy is ready, they give a
dance. At this dance, the drum is played for the god, and
[787] the boy must dance. If the god comes to him, then the
obia man gets his money, but if the god does not come,
then he does not get what was promised him, because they
had made an agreement for a god, and no god came."

881 The training was not very difficult—it was not like the
869 training for becoming an obia man. A boy was given obia
water to wash in. Every eight days the water in the obia
776 pot was changed, and this bathing continued for three
moons. When the ritual of purification was over, he was
[783] taught the drum rhythms of the god, the invocations which
the drum sounded, and the spoken invocations. Songs,
and make-up for the dancing, and the dancing itself he was
taught, and when he might call upon the god, and what he
must do when the god comes, and what offerings the god
was to receive. If the god spoke "tongues," he was also
instructed in the appropriate language. There were the
words of the mocking little Apuku gods and the sounds
which only Toné people made, and there was the "Kromanti
tongo."

"Can all the gods be bought?" we asked.

432 "Kweti, kweti!" he shook his head in emphatic denial.
776 "The river gods cannot be bought. You are born a Toné
789 man or woman, or the Toné god comes to you from your
family. But all the Vodu gods you can buy; and the god Bongo, the alligator; and the ant hill gods and the gods of the kankan tree, and the Apuku bush gods." He paused for an instant, as if he were considering something. "And men buy Kromanti for their sons, if they have none to give them. Almost every man in the bush has Kromanti. If he hasn't it, then he tries to buy it for his sons. A man needs Kromanti. When he has the Kromanti spirit, fire cannot hurt him, nor glass, nor anything that cuts—

anything made of iron—nor can a gun shoot him, nor an 432
arrow pierce him. If he goes through a thicket of thorns 776
or climbs a thorny palm tree when the spirit comes to him, 789
he is not harmed. That is Kromanti."

"How much does a person pay an obia man for giving a boy Kromanti?" we asked.

"It costs plenty, white man. But a good obia man never [435]
asks too much. If a man says he will give the boy Kromanti, for not too many guilders, then we know he will do it. But if a man asks forty, fifty, then we know he is not an honest man, and he is not a good man. I have heard, though, of a good obia man who took as much as twenty-four guilders, but he gave the boy a strong Kromanti spirit, and it took much time to teach him."

3

From time to time members of Bayo's family visited 791
our camp. Each time we were introduced to a new brother, or father, or *suwagi*—brother-in-law. Among these visitors was a man whose name we never learned, though we had talked with him a good deal. He was, we later came to know, a man who knew obia. He was a scholar among his people, a thoughtful man who often went about alone, instead of being accompanied by a fellow clan member or a member of his family, as is customary among these people. Like Bayo, he had an incest kunu, and at his age,
he had already had occasion to see what kunu planned for 791
him. He coughed badly. When men went to cut timber, 164
he could not go with them because of his cough and the fever which went with the cough.

"Have you been to a good obia man?" we asked him.

He smiled. Of what use to go from one diviner to the next,
from one man who had special magic to another, when a [753]
man knew that what was troubling him was kunu?

"Come to the city with us," we said, when we knew him better, "and we will take you to a doctor. He may be able to do something for you."

791 753 He promised readily enough to go with us, but Bayo
789 told us later that he would not come.

"He says the white doctor cannot do more than obia
776 can do. He says a man must take what kunu brings."

Was there no obia against kunu? we asked of Bayo.

"No, but kunu is not greater than obia. It is something
else. When the Sky God gave obia to man, he gave it to
help man live, not to help him do bad things. When men
[688] and women earn a kunu for their family, it is because they
do what is hateful to the great gods and ancestors. Obia
was not sent to save men from punishment."

"Does obia never punish, Bayo?" We were thinking of what he said about his own obia, of how when it seized him, he destroyed things.

But he would say no more. "I am too young, Bak'a, to
[888] speak of these things. At my age I know only a little obia.
You must ask the old men."

4

554 The conversation led us one day to the obia men on the
791 river. They were, we knew, important persons in the Bush
Negro communities. An obia man of reputation was not only consulted by his own villagers and clansmen, but men and women came to him from distant villages, when those who were nearer had failed them. It occurred sometimes that even from the Awka villages on the lower river, these Saramacca obia men were sought out—perhaps this was because of the same tradition which encouraged the buying of strange gods to enlarge the family pantheon, perhaps it was because of something which touched still deeper beliefs.

868 How did a man become an obia man?

867 From what we had already heard, it was apparent that here was something which approached the formal education of our own civilization, a form of education, indeed, which we pride ourselves is unique to our own way of life.

All other knowledge the Bush Negro child gains by being about with members of his family who are busy at

773 of the earth. In one kingdom, a ruler sent the heralds to proclaim throughout the land that he who killed the bird would get half his kingdom, and his daughter in marriage. Anansi, the spider, killed a hawk and brought it to the ruler. But Anansi lied when he said this was the bird that shook the earth with its cries. At the very time he was trying to persuade all the people that this was the bird, the cries of the ominous bird were heard. So they put Anansi in jail. Now one day there was born to a woman a child who at birth wore a cloth of pieced designs, and a hunting sack. This boy said to his mother, he said, "Give me a little water, mother, and I will go out into the world to learn wisdom. God has sent me to kill the bird which troubles mankind."

When the boy grew to manhood he succeeded in trapping this bird that knew how to cook obia without fire. He killed the bird and took the obia pot with him, and that is how he came by the secrets of obia. He passed on his knowledge to the men of his family, and this has been going on till today, so that obia is being spread throughout the world by the descendants of this man who killed the bird that knew obia.

776 But obia was not one thing only.

"Obia," Bayo's uncle had said, "is first of all the spirit. It is everywhere. But there are many kinds of obia. There is black man's obia, and there is white man's obia. Here in the bush black man's obia is the strongest.

789 "A man who has the obia spirit makes obia to wear, and
778 obia to drink, and obia to rub the body with, and obia water
for bathing. He can make obia drums and obia benches.
776 The spirit tells you how to do things, and it tells you what
to do. When we say a man has strong obia, we mean
his spirit is strong."

756 The Bush Negro obia man, said Bayo to us one day, knew
751 the things the white doctor knew—he knew how to heal—
789 and he knew other things, too. He knew how to keep sick-
ness away. The things an obia man gave for healing were

called obias. The charms he gave for warding off illness and 756
evil were obias, too. 751

"So we call all these things. But each obia has a name. 789
Every charm I wear is an obia, but if I wore the one you are wearing, it would be a soul cord, an *ak'a tetei*. One below the knee we call *asumani* in my village, and one for the wrist *afimu*. The one on the upper arm is named *ando*. But there are many names, and they are all obia, because inside them is the spirit obia which gives them power. When a man sells you an obia and passes its power on to you, he breathes on your hands as they hold the obia. When he does it, he gives you the obia spirit which went into the making of this obia. If he did not make it himself, the spirit was given him by the obia man, and he gives it to you."

Obia, then, is the spirit; obia is the preventive and 776
curing agent; obias are the charms that are worn by 751
people to help them. Some have called these obias 789
"fetiches," but even a slight understanding of them should be enough to bring the outsider to the realization that the object of itself is meaningless, and that it is only the power that has been given the charm that makes it effective.

Yet it is not strange that the importance of the fetich has 776
been overestimated, for if the visitor did not draw out the 789
Bush Negroes about their gods and their theories of the universe, the existence of these higher powers would almost go unrecognized. For everywhere there are to be found obias guarding the village, obias screening paths, obias worn by the people. That they are important to the Bush Negro is obvious. But they are important for day-by-day existence, and they do not possess the overwhelming importance of the great spirits who control the universe.

Many of these charms came to us as tangible evidence of the belief in obia. Some of those we acquired were of a unique character because of the power that was latent in them, some because of the intricacy of their taboos. Yet all of them paled in interest and in arresting quality beside the Kromanti Mama that came to us one night in secret.

Chapter XVIII

"OBIA COMES!"

1

789 778 WHITE and gaunt and staring in the dim light, the Kromanti Mama rested on its whitened bench, and about it coiled a snake modeled from the same sacred clay.

It had come to us in stealth, and as we responded to the awe it inspired, we could not but wonder what had prompted the man who had brought it to reveal one of the most secret religious objects known to his people. He came late one night, his burden carefully wrapped so that no one might suspect what he carried. That night only, while in whispers he told us what it was and wherein lay its powers, was it out of those wrappings, for not alone during the remainder of our stay in the bush but while we were in the city, we were careful to respect the man's trust.

"When you take it to your white man's country, and some man sees it who has a Tiger spirit, he will shout the cry of the tiger. All who have Tigri are related. Wherever the Kromanti Mama goes, there the Tigri obia goes, too."

2

776 Obia, we were told, came into the world to heal and to warn and to protect mankind. Of all obia, Kromanti is the strongest. Why, then, is the Kromanti obia so feared?

The clue to an answer to this question lies in the behavior of the men to whom this obia comes when they are possessed with it. The man who is actuated by Kromanti obia is

feared by all who themselves do not have Kromanti. Obia 776
Kromanti warns and protects and heals, but its powers [575]
are only for those who belong to the Kromanti group.

Whether Kromanti is the African warrior society preserved in this bush, it is impossible to say. If this were the 575
case, then the definite military organization of many of the West African societies should be present. The military character of any group among the Bush Negroes could not even be hinted at, of course, without the greatest caution. In their descriptions of the Kromanti, our intimates among the Bush Negroes never indicated in any way the existence of such an organization. Even leading questions brought out only unqualified denials instead of the revealing answers "I do not know," or "Massa Gadu sabi." Yet there are undoubtedly secrets which Kromanti men do not share with outsiders, and we remembered that when a Kromanti man dies, he must be "separated" from the Kromanti group [766]
just as he is "separated" from his family and from his village.

About the very meaning of the word Kromanti there can 175
only be speculation. During the time of the slave trade, 579
there were two ports on the Gold Coast of Africa known as 567
Little and Great Coromantyne. From these ports came the slaves who, in the New World, were known as Coromantyne slaves. These slaves were so warlike, so prone to cause uprisings, that only English and Dutch colonies consented to buy them and in these colonies when slave rebellions broke out to alarm the white planters, they were led by the proud Coromantyne slaves.

It would not be strange, therefore, if the same term was 776
carried over into the free civilization of this bush to 575
typify the obia which protected and watched over the fighters who had won this freedom.

Other indications point to the same assumption. The strongest spirits of the Kromanti, those which inspire the greatest fear when they possess men of a village are Tigri and Djadja. Tigri is the jaguar, Djadja is often vaguely translated by our word "devil." If we again turn to the West African societies, we find that one of the most dreaded

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575 of the secret societies which flourish there is the Leopard Society, and this African feline is not very different from the one which gives its name to the Tigri obia. Other societies which chastise and protect have often been designated as "devil" societies.

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776
575 Kromanti is feared, then, because of the kind of preventive it is. The man to whom this obia comes cannot be harmed by bullets shot from guns, by glass, by swords that cut, or by thorns which lacerate. Such a man is protected in combat from the weapons of his enemies and from thorny barricades that might be raised against his attack. It is protection for the warriors, and when it comes, the warriors who have the obia do not hesitate to test their immunity and to try that of others. A friendly, unassertive man seized by the Tiger Kromanti is in the grip of a power which transforms him into a tiger. When obia comes in the sacred dances, it is Kromanti obia. The Bush Negroes do not dance for the healing, protecting spirit that is obia in general. It is too remote. But when they dance and Kromanti comes, the women often flee, and the men who do not have Kromanti discreetly disappear. Only those who have Kromanti have nothing to fear from the attacks of their fellows, for they are protected by the power common to them all—the power of being unharmed by machetes or guns.

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346 What is inside the Kromanti obia houses we cannot say, for we were never permitted to enter them. When we recognized their presence in villages we visited, the fact that they were Kromanti houses was acknowledged, but we were never allowed even to inspect the outside closely, and we were never accorded permission to photograph one of these shrines.

From our informants we learned that inside these houses there are paintings on the walls in black and red, the Kromanti colors, and in the white of the sacred pemba. There were, we were told, whitened benches that had about their tops the grass skirt of a kind worn by the obia man when he danced.

In the Kromanti house, too, was the Kromanti Mama. But until our friend brought us the one he had made for

789 778 the space where the snake was modeled, but never touching it.

532 The man who was explaining the bench to us pointed once more to the snake. "It is not always lifeless as you see it here," he said.

When the snake came to life, trouble was brewing. It turned red, the color of blood, and all who came into the Kromanti house and saw it were warned of danger.

"How does the snake know when to come to life?"

● [774] "It is Agbo, the guard, who tells the snake. When she tells him there is trouble, he turns red, and then we know."

Immunity as well as knowledge was afforded by the magical powers of this stool and its snake and the Kromanti Mama.

"A man who has Kromanti sits down on the stool, and puts Agbo on his head, and when he has done that, nothing can harm him."

[782] Thus is safety attained. But this only comes if the image has been propitiated by the Kromanti men. Rum, not of the sweet kind, must be offered it and prayers transmitted to its spirit on the drum which Kromanti recognizes—the apinti. If this is done, the Kromanti Mama will not lose its power, and the snake will continue to turn the warning color when danger threatens, and the bench will give protection to the men who have the Kromanti obia.

4

796 Not long after we had entered the bush we saw our first Kromanti dance. The people of several neighboring villages came to our base camp to dance for us. They asked, "Will you be afraid if the dancing brings Kromanti?" We told them we should welcome whatever spirits came.

Late that afternoon canoes brought people to our encampment for the festivities. Some, with an eye to trade, [439] had brought carvings and obias, and, as we sat and talked with them about what should be given for the pieces they offered us, we could watch the dance outside our open hut.

"OBIA COMES!"

"Put them on. See the moon? You will catch fresh colds 796
if you sit in the moonlight with your heads uncovered." [821]

So with sun helmets on our heads we sat, and, as we 781
listened to the new rhythms of the drums, there came a 796
shriek from the river which brought us to our feet. Those
who were not dancing ran up the hill away from the drums. 776 ●

"Obia! Obia comes! It is the Kromanti!" were the cries, 787
and our cook and our town man placed themselves in line
across the front of our hut, watching uneasily.

"They will destroy all you have if they get inside," they called to us, "we must try to keep them out."

Up from the river, along the path he had trodden but a while before, came a man whom we could not recognize in the disguise given him by the paint on his face. Half his face was white, half a deep red, and we later learned what we did not then know, that this was the face marking of the Djadja Kromanti and that this man was possessed by one of the two Kromanti spirits which carry danger to those who are present when the seizure comes. He advanced toward the drums, machete in hand, as though he were stalking his prey, his legs raised high at every step, trailing some enemy. At his mouth the foam was gathering, and
the words he uttered were in the Kromanti tongo, the sacred [198]
speech not understood by the uninitiated.

The songs changed in character, and the singers were men. The women who had not run away were dancing a quick accompaniment to the drum beats, adding their shrill voices to the singing and the intensity of the cries of the possessed man. When the possessed man reached the hut, he stopped in front of the drummers. As their rhythms poured out of the barrel-like drums, he answered stroke for stroke with shouted cries in his sacred secret language, raising his machete higher and higher, until, with a quick stroke, he slashed at two of the players who were seated side by side on a log. He missed them by what seemed a hair's breadth as his machete, whistling through the narrow space between their bodies, sank deep into the log on which they sat.

796 776 781 787 Other cries now came to us, and from the bush a second possessed man burst into the clearing. He, too, had a machete, and he made straight for our hut. But obia did not prompt him to insist on entering, and he came close to us, gibbering in our faces, and then, stepping high as had the other, went his way to slash at our washbasins, sending one of them, that we treasure as a memory of that night's adventure, hurtling into the bush with a deep dent in its side.

From the river came renewed shouts, and some of the men dashed to the bank to jump into a canoe and paddle into the rapids, so that they might watch the possessed man who had leaped into the river to pit his strength against the fast water. On and on he swam upstream in the foaming water, as from the bank we watched his progress uneasily in the clear light of the moon. Finally obia left him, and the men in the boat seized his inert form and brought him back to shore.

796 787 When we returned to our hut, we found several others possessed. Obia had claimed six or seven, some with faces painted half white, half red, as was that of the first man, others with faces whitened, while still others had white faces with black markings. These last had Tigri, and the white was for Opete. Those who danced for the buzzard had no machetes, but went about in a circle, moving with bodies bent forward from their waists and with arms thrown back in imitation of the bird from which their spirit took its name.

One man with the Tigri face-painting took away the apinti from the drummer and placing it in the center of the clearing leaned over it and began drumming faster rhythms. Now indeed obia itself was drumming.

796 273 Long before this, we had observed the amenities of the occasion. As hosts, our duty was to provide the ceremonial rum with which the spirits needed to be regaled, and our cook, holding the bottle of rum for us, filled and refilled the small glass which we offered to men and women. Some did not drink at all but poured part of the rum on the

576 *bah?"* In other words, "Brother, (Sister, Father, Mother) howdy, how-do-you-do?"

751 There is a ceremony connected with the simple act of en-
776 tering a Bush Negro town. A stranger might bring in foul
intentions or evil spirits. The village must be protected against this horrific possibility, so nearly every path leading to the town has a magic device, known as an *azang pau,* to keep the spirits out. It consists of a dry stick across the path overhead, to which palm fronds are lashed. They hang down, brushing over everyone who passes beneath. The visitor passes under the azang pau, and is cleared of evil spirits that might harm the inhabitants of the village.

The Djukas have invisible enemies. On either side of the
[778] path, near the palm barrier, is the wooden statue of a fetish
to provide protection from these enemies. The fetish named Cromanti, on one side, protects the village from the evil spirit that dwells in the silk-cotton tree, the *con con dree.* Opposite him stands *Aflamu,* who secures the village against the attacks of a mighty tribe of unseen men, who are the sworn enemies of the Bush Negro and kill him with invisible arrows.

Walking up from the river we reach the barrier, and pause before it for the customary ritual. But Abaisa is a potent chief, the head of his *lo* or clan, the *Abaisa-lo.* So long as the bahkra accompanies him, no ceremony is necessary. We enter unchallenged into the clearing beyond.

648 The usual procedure is for the white man to hang back and
576 let his paddler precede him. Moi-Man gains admittance to re-

Then comes the *sanstee* dance, accompanied by songs of 796
the rebellion. Ancient heroes live again. Once more raids are 535
made on outlying plantations. The spirit of defiance that
Stedman found at Boucou is still kept alive. Then come
softer songs—songs of love. *"Te e durmi e songo me, grandanke,"* a girl sings plaintively. She is telling her lover,
"When you sleep, dream of me, many thanks." *"Te kai me* [535]
u srni neauco, becan na bonu soni e tu layme"—"When you
lead me to deceit I will not follow; such things you should
not teach me."

Again the dancers find fault with the orchestra, protesting loudly. They are not satisfied with the rhythm. Abruptly the chief dancer seizes a drum and rolls out a call to Apuku, god of the forest, asking Apuku to come.

Dimly through the darkness they can feel some response. 796
Apuku is coming. Everyone runs back a few steps and utters 535
a slight scream. The spirit of the bush god is entering their 776 ●
bodies. He is welcomed with a little dance, jerkily done, in 158
which all participate. Then comes the special Apuku dance,
where writhing, circling, snaking arms simulate the twisted
lianas of the jungle, which is the god's home.

Once the spirit of the bush god has entered them, they cannot stop. The drums increase their volume and tempo, until the rhythm is too rapid and intricate for white ears to follow. Now truly they are hypnotized by the feverish monotony, the shuffling beat of fingers on the drum-heads. Because of this trance, fatigue is forgotten. The little *baboula* keeps steady time, throbbing like a heart-beat. Flat hands

776 shade out strange metres on the *nanda*. There is a break; the
535 orchestra stops, and the interval is filled in with the heavy
● 776 booming of the *apenti*. Often the drummers seize a bush-
158 knife and batter at the pegs, stretching the dried skin to the
[534] proper tone. Mist from the river has dampened their hair, unnoticed. The dance will continue until morning; they must play until the spirit of Apuku has gone.

776 Everything is set for the climax. Some are still watching
535 while the others dance. Since the old men are too dignified,
158 their places are taken by younger men from sixteen to twenty-five. There are more women dancing than men, anyhow. The white man is wondering how it is going to end. Despite the excitement there has been no orgiastic episode.

Grand finale. There is a tremendous screech from out of the blackness beyond. Three practically naked blacks come rushing up from the river, their faces and bodies daubed
[302] hideously with pemba dotee, the ceremonial white clay. One has stripes around his arms, belly, and legs, his face all white. Another's face is bisected with white and yellow pigment. The third is Adjobo, the medicine man; he has circles of clay on his forehead, cheeks, and chin, and rings around his neck. The presence of the ceremonial clay indicates the presence of a god. There is no doubt but that the hideousness of these men inspires a feeling of awe.

They burst into the circle of dancers and scatter them. Everyone retreats before them, with actual or pretended fright. The children become hysterical and cling frantically to their mothers for protection. Women in the crowd are cry-

tradition and authority. The older women's opinions bear 586
considerable weight, for it is chiefly they who maintain the
customs of the tribe. The mother-in-law and father-in-law [606]
are held in special esteem.

Unlike divorce, death is an occasion of genuine sorrow. 765
If a man's wife dies, he may go into mourning for a whole
year. His mourning consists in staying in his hut and doing
no work, while his dead wife's family brings him food and
supports him. When the year is up, he makes a sacrifice to
"the little ground god, Amu" before taking another woman. [776
He slaughters a fowl, letting the blood flow from the throat 782]
on to the earth. After this ritual sacrifice a big dance is held,
and he is permitted to marry again. It is his next wife who
insists upon this ritual.

When a man dies, it is sometimes incumbent upon his 587
widow to have intercourse with his oldest surviving brother and marry him. The fact that he may already be married makes no difference whatever. It is imperative that they live together for several months; after that, if there is no affection between them, they can separate. This is a widespread custom among primitives, and there are remnants of it in the present-day customs of orthodox Jews.

Among the Aucaners it is not necessary for a man to have intercourse with his deceased brother's wife. He must, however, take care of her for a period of six months, after which time she is free to remarry.

A woman may publicly mourn her deceased husband by [765]
singing a dirge every little while.

Not only are human beings animated by spirits, but the 774
Djukas believe that everything, every object in the external world, is the residence of a spirit. These spirits are called *Mama*. Thus, canoes have spirits (*Boto Mama*) and so have huts (*Oso Mama*), paddles, fetishes, stones, and especially drums. Each has an impalpable soul. Moreover, there are several jungle spirits, tribes of ghosts and invisible men.

The woods of Surinam are filled with ghosts. *Winti* is 776
a ghost that can come into your body and make you do things you otherwise would not do. A pregnant woman, several weeks before her delivery, was struck dumb by an unknown enemy. This aphasia disappeared upon the birth of the child. When she was expecting another child, she fasted six days, to the point of exhaustion. Then a magic rite was undergone, and she broke the fast. Knowing that someone has put *Winti* on her to prevent her from having children, she now fends them by simulating idiocy. From this it is apparent that
Winti is under a measure of control; it can be sent into the [754]
body of an enemy to do him harm, then it is called *wissi*.

Jumbees are also bad spirits that can be controlled by the device of magic. Once put on a person, they bring him bad luck. Pain is caused by a spirit called *Congo Burtri*. The soul is known as *Basuki*, or *Kra*. In the bush there also dwell tribes of evil men who are invisible; every time a Bush Negro looks at them they turn themselves into a tree or an anthill. When the Bush Negro is not looking, they kill him with unseen arrows.

The Djukas believe in the *Gran Gadu*, the ruling spirit

● 776 over all things. Among his other names are *Gran Tata* (Great Father) and *Old Nengre*. Subordinate to the chief deity is Apuku, spirit of the jungle. There is also the spirit of the river, *Tonai*, or *Amucu*, or *Watra Mama*. Then comes the snake spirit, whose ritual was once a thing of horror, *Papa Gadu*, whose other name is *Voodoo*.

The evil spirit, the bad, wild spirit of the bush, is *Cromanti*, who possesses the dancers in their midnight fury. His dwelling-place is the silk-cotton tree. In the jungles of both West Africa and South America the silk-cotton trees (*Ceiba pentandra* or *Bombax ceiba*) grow to an immense size, towering above all the other vegetation. The Bush Negroes [824] consider this *con con dree* sacred, refusing to touch it with a knife or axe. Any man who cuts one down is accursed. Once, during the construction of a village, a man was forced to cut one down. Cromanti went into his wife and killed her in six weeks. Similar to the silk-cotton is the *kotu con con dree*, and any man so foolhardy as to molest it will get into dangerous trouble.

The kindly spirit is *Aflamu*, who protects the Djukas against the invisible men who live in the jungle. The fetishes to Aflamu have two eyes, one looking forward and the other placed backward, to indicate his unceasing vigilance in all directions. In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer mentions the Djukas as setting up a Janus-faced image on the village paths. We have never seen one of these and doubt their existence. The fetish to Aflamu is placed on the village path, however, and the same idea is involved in the eye set in the back.

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931

SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

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House God, Upper Surinam River. Note hut built to shade the fetish.

[Facing p. 140]

Other evil spirits are *Bakru, Yorkas* (a Carib word), *Azeman*, and *Lybba*. The Bakru are very ugly. A Negro picked up a crying child and sat him on his shoulders. His companion noticed the child's eyes and said: "That is a Bakru." The Negro dashed the child down. The child was instantly transformed into an ape and said: "I missed you that time, but next time I'll get you." The Bakru may also take the form of little mannikins with large heads. 776

Yorkas are ghosts. They are very similar to our conception of haunting spooks. They may be the ghosts of dead people, more especially of dead enemies who have returned to do harm. [775]

The Azeman are the most awful of all spirits. They leave their skins every night and travel about in the form of persons without any skin. Consequently they are an ugly, bleeding sight. At dawn they assume their covering. But if the skin is found and salt placed around it, it shrinks so that it becomes too small for the Azeman to get back into. This causes them to vanish. Another method of getting rid of the Azeman is to scatter rice about. They dislike rice very much and stop to pick the grains up out of the way. In their preoccupation they do not notice the coming of dawn, which is very harmful to them.

The Lybba are spirits or ghosts similar to the Yorka.

A sleeping Bush Negro must be waked with care, as his personal spirit, the soul, or kra, may not be able to get back in time if he is too suddenly aroused. 828 774 513

The Djukas may be possessed by almost any spirit. During 000

776 787 The Djukas may be possessed by almost any spirit. During the dances they sometimes feel Apuku or Cromanti, as the case may be. Once a Bush Negro was possessed by the spirit of a jaguar. The big buck seized a dog that happened to be loitering near by and tore it to pieces with his fingers. After a dance a man was seized by the spirit of a rebel leader of the old plantation days; he seized a cutlass and began hacking and smashing everything around him until the others forcibly restrained him.

776 782 [778] The Bush Negroes do not worship the jungle spirits very meticulously, but every village has fetishes, usually standing in little god-houses which are mere sheds to keep off the rain. Under the shade of the tiny roof can be seen the stiff visage of one of these deities, at times with remnants of food and drink at his feet. Beside the food there is usually a paddle for the god to eat with, elaborately carved like any food-paddle, and smeared with pemba dotee, the sacred white clay. This clay is smeared on all religious or ceremonial objects. For the individual to hold profitable converse with the gods, he must be smeared with it; pemba dotee seems to be a sort of catalytic agent between the soul and the deity. This custom is a West African survival, and not to be found among the Indians of Dutch Guiana.

778 782 Along the river, also, are occasional shrines where the Bush Negroes may appease their deities when on long journeys, or when hunting. The shrine consists of a tall pole which may be either festooned or plain. At the base of many of the poles are shells, stones, bottles, and pieces of wood, as well as food and drink, possibly as a sacrifice. Every village,

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931

SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

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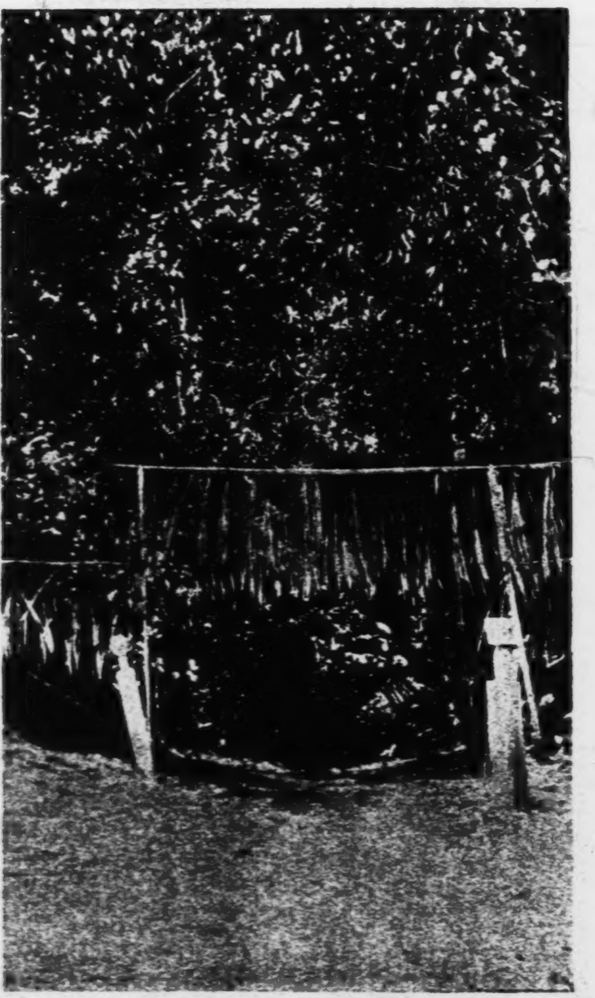

The Azang Pau. Phantom Barrier Over Paths Leading to Village. Upper Surinam River.

[Facing p. 144]

severe attack of winti. She fell upon her knees and appeared 825
half lame. The others lifted her up. A youth came with a 776
green stick; he bit into it and spat on the woman's calves, 158
legs, feet, and arms. After a while she was able to stand alone. This seemed to constitute the end of the dance. It had somehow become known that the Papa Gadu, the snake spirit, was angry, and this big *gadu pray* (god's spread) had been necessary in order to propitiate him.

The women who are seized with the winti sometimes mutter a few words. The others regard these as the utterances of a spirit and say: "*Ya, gadu*"—"yes, God." Upon inquiry among the women who had caught the winti spirit, Mr. de Goeje found that they all complained of feeling very dizzy or giddy when in such a trance.

* * *

Certain localities, as well as individuals, may be possessed 776
by evil spirits. The Pwaba Creek is such a place. Were a 751
Djuka to go up this creek with any clothing on, he would never come out alive. So upon entering the waters of Pwaba the Djuka strips off all his clothes. That nullifies the bad magic.

Every Bush Negro, to protect himself from all varieties 751
of black magic, wears a number of charms or amulets. He 778

778 carvings. Still another magic device is a red necklace of macaw feathers, to bring luck in hunting. Another obeiah with
[843] a tinkling bell is worn around the neck by pregnant women to tell the unborn child that everything is auspicious in the outside world.

Some of the beliefs accompanying these amulets are odd
●[776] and child-like. The Djukas think that spirits are afraid of strangers, and flee in terror when a stranger is encountered. The inhabitants of the little town of *Pekein Say* (Talk a Little Bit) have the power to call back hunters who are lost in the bush, a virtue peculiar to these townfolk alone. These curious beliefs persist despite the fact that they could easily be tested and exposed. Any coincidence will strongly reinforce them. Late one evening, going up the river, we came to an Aucaner village and stopped to spend the night. Not liking the looks of the place we told our paddlers to push on to the next village before night. Tired, they grumbled at this. To give weight to our decision we told the blacks that our obeiahs were warning us not to stay, and that it would be dangerous to let this warning pass unheeded. Impressed with the gravity of the warning, they acceded to our wishes. We went on, although not being able to reach the adjacent village in time we were forced to spend the night in the bush.

Later, coming back down the river, we learned that the village we had passed by had held, on that very night, a great and disastrous dance. There had been much drinking of high
[579 731] wine, and, in the drunken and hysterical excitement that followed, half the town was burned down and three men were Killed.

784 These food trafers are sometimes chosen by the individual,
262 and are acquired also by inheritance. A certain Bush Negro
[424 got his trafer in this way: His grandmother had a vision,
787] called *papa twinti,* and she informed her grandson that she
had been possessed. This made him feel the spirit of Cromanti.
In that bad state he got the *idée fixe* that shooting a
turtle would be reprehensible and dangerous. This animal
then became his tabooed food, and for the rest of his life it
is trafer so far as he is concerned.

* * *

797 So far only a slight attempt has been made to Christianize
the Djukas. The Catholics and Moravian Brothers have established
mission stations at a few points along the rivers.
Their efforts at conversion appear on the whole to be unsuccessful.
The Bush Negroes are converted in small numbers
and very superficially; in moments of stress they will revert
back to their jungle deities. The whole spirit of Christian
customs is foreign to their mode of life. They have the Gran
● 776 Gadu, an adequate enough image of divine power. Their
782 prayers are sometimes said directly to him, or they pray to
their ancestors to intercede with the Gran Gadu for aid.
Sometimes the prayer is said by being beaten out on the tomtom,
[778] for the tomtom is sacred, and the throbs of the great

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drums carry farther toward heaven than the talkee-talkee 782 778 of a lone supplicant.

It is not easy to distinguish between the primitive's magic 756 and his medicine. In the village organization a distinction is 793 sometimes made between the *medicine man*, who is concerned with remedies for sickness, and the *obeiah priest*, whose business is charms and rituals. There are two or three obeiah priests to each village. Their profession is the propitiation of spirits, that is, magic and religion. The magic of the obeiah men is largely secret. Once we arrived at a village while a ritual of some nature was going on. Pots were stewing in the centre of the clearing, while obeiah men were moving around them. One held a rattle, which he shook monotonously. The bahkra was asked to leave. It was magic in the making.

The Bush Negroes possess an extensive system of primitive 824 medicine. Various roots, herbs, and nuts are gathered in the jungle, and their use is mingled with various superstitions. The witch doctor or medicine man who prepares infusions 756 from these herbs holds no exalted position in the esteem of the villagers; he is simply following a particular profession to which no special prestige is attached. He may, however, [793] be an obeiah priest in addition to being a medicine man.

He prepares several kinds of medicine, among them the 756 *snakee-kutti*, or snake-bite cure. It cures the bites of all reptiles 789 278 and makes the person immune from future attack. Snakee-kutti is made in this way: a venomous snake is killed and the head and the tail-end are cut from the body; the tail

174 many of these brave and hardy blacks, who rebelled in Jamaica, Haiti, and elsewhere, as well as in Surinam. This intractable and high-spirited nature still characterizes the contemporary Bush Negro, who has the same hardihood, the same impatience of control, that marked the wild Coromantis of the early revolts. They may have been slaves in fact, but they were never slaves in spirit.

The name of these fractious slaves is not unfamiliar; we have encountered it in contemporaneous Bush Negro life.
● [776] *Cromanti* now designates a god of the South American bush. The name has apparently travelled from one continent to another, from a Dutch slave factory of the seventeenth century to the Bush Negro villages of the twentieth. Today there are "fetishes to the bad, wild god Cromanti."

776 In the person of Cromanti, the Djukas have obviously dei-
174 fied their own ancestors. The bad, wild god of the bush is to be identified with the Bush Negroes' Coromantyn forbears. The dancers smeared with sacred clay, whose mad gyrations
[787] with whistling bush-knives signified that they were possessed by the spirit of Cromanti, were reincarnations of the rebels of the old days. The Djukas' bad demon of the forest is an atavistic memory, personifying the spirit of the uprisings.

/12 cont./
796 Then they call all the neighbors together to take part in the
273 festivities to be held, which consist of invoking their gods amidst
continuous dancing and excessive drinking.

They begin the festivities only on a Friday and usually
finish on a Sunday or Monday, depending on the larger or smaller
[147] supply of drink, so, lacking this, the festival ends. After the
conclusion they are usually extremely tired and listless and give
themselves up entirely to rest for at least two or three days.

It is a definite requirement at these festivities to be very
amply supplied with strong drink, because one must drink without
[782] interruption in order to remain in a continuous narcosis. With
each drink they first pour a little on the ground, -- so that it, too,
on which they find themselves so gay, may participate in their
enjoyment.

[262] The merrymakers then take care that they will by no means
[577] be lacking in fish, wild game, bacon, rice, etc., since it is a
matter of honor with them to display the most lavish hospitality on
such occasions.

● 776 The gods that they worship are:

Loango Gado,
Papa Gado,
Cromantie Gado,

/13/ names certainly derived from the various African tribes of
these names.

In the first two they glorify nature and everything created,
from which it therefore appears that these are merely subordinate
[787] gods of the unnamed, single great spirit. The last is above all
regarded by them as the mediator who transmits their wishes to
the great spirit; he is invoked especially at burial ceremonies and
for consultation in connection with serious illnesses.

796 They do not have any other cult or religion, so far as I was
[771] able to discover, but only the fixed habit of still celebrating together
[132] and with their chief [illegible]d captains on the first Friday of the
new moon in the month of October or November, after the long
[783] dry period has set in for good, a great feast that has as its goal a
general atonement, to cleanse them of the misdeeds that they have
committed.

/72 cont./

643 The grand man acts as land head for the whole of the tribe.
778 It is he who has the care of the sanctuary of mama gɔɔ̃ and who
241 prays each year in the presence of a large gathering of people for
the fertility of the soil.

643 The grand man is the priest of Odun, divinity whom the Boni
793 regard as avenger of offenses against moral and religious law; by
776 virtue of this, he alone is qualified to administer the oath against
782 wiʃi (sorcery) and to implore the mercy of Odun toward those who
have gone against his laws by fighting with arms.

643 In his religious functions this usually weak and unobtrusive
156 man acts with sovereign authority and assurance, and we have
several times seen people tremble before him.

643 If someone has seriously transgressed the customary laws, or
681 if he has stolen, committed adultery, given blows, poured forth
[673] serious insults or curses, the grand man inflicts on him punishment
proportional to the gravity of the offense, such as making planks,
/73/ a boat, pounding rice (if it is a woman). The product of the
punishment is acquired by the grand man, as are the fines in
money which he imposes in less serious cases.

643 For example in October, 1952, two adolescents of Boniville,
685 Awétipay and Adyuka, were surprised while they were trying to
break into an inhabited house; the grand man sentenced them forthwith to three days of forced labor, in the course of which he made
them clean the approaches to the village and collect for his benefit
wood for heating.

643 He can also punish disobedient or disrespectful young men
689 by making them do work reserved for women, such as weeding
462 the approaches to the village and the removal of dog droppings.

The grand man can confine a man to Boni villages by for-
643 bidding him to go beyond l'Enfant Perdu to the north and
681 Kormotibo to the south; that is called sitafu sama (sitafu = captive).
The man concerned, deprived of means of earning his living,
thus becomes dependent on his family until he makes honorable
amends.

/162 cont./

764 In principle the forward bearer (who is called bossman by analogy
767 with a boat) must belong to the dead person's lineage. Apart
[613] from this restriction, the bearers can be (and are in fact) any people whatever, the only condition required being that they be extremely vigorous, because the load they carry is at the limit of their strength.

Fraud can exist in isolated cases, but in the great majority of cases there is no doubt as to the good faith of the bearers; they give contradictory answers, go ahead and back interminably, until, exhausted, they are raised up again by others. Actually, the interpretation of these automatic movements does not differ essentially from any process of divination.

The dead person is interrogated from the age of four or
[766] five years up. If it is a very young child, he is not interrogated; but the causes of his death are sought by interrogating possessed people, and if there is reason to, the kunu is appeased in the same fashion.

764 At the beginning of the interrogation the tribunal tries to
787 make sure that the dead person was not a wisimã. After sending
754 the bearers to the other end of the village, the president of the assemblage has two young men hidden in huts; then he has the bearers called, saying to the dead person: "I have lost So-and-so and So-and-so, find them." If the dead person was an upright man, he must have acquired a suprahuman clairvoyance permitting him to direct his bearers straight away toward the huts in question. If he was a wisimã, he will be as if blind; his bearers go wandering in vain from hut to hut.

They state that this test always succeeds.

764 The interrogation proceeds interminably. The causes of
787 death are taken up. The first question is: is it a god who killed
761 you? The answer is nearly always yes, and they proceed by
[776] elimination in order to arrive, for example, at learning that it
[784] is an Ampuku, that it is the Ampuku borne by So-and-so. By what the kunu was set in motion, how to appease it, is not the

/168 cont./

764 co-wife, on the contrary, are completely veiled and show by their state of prostration the keenest sorrow. Each of them is assisted by a female relative who supports them when they have to move somewhere else, for they are supposed to be too overcome to move alone.

764 The interrogation as to the causes of death has already
787 taken place the day before, but Tafanié proclaims, in front of
me, the result of it to the latest arrivals: the deceased was
761 struck down by a yɔrka which pursues the lineage with its kunu. She had already received several warnings in the form of illness; the yɔrka had demanded a payment which she and her near relatives had neglected to furnish. Impossible to learn anything further before being able to interrogate this yɔrka, whose habitual bearer has left for Saint-Laurent. It is necessary to wait for his return in order to mollify the yɔrka's anger.

764 About ten o'clock the members of the lãnti kuutu go to-
ward the fraga tiki of the Awara Bakka lo, in front of which they
769 all sit down on their stools. I notice that not a single man of
778 the dead person's lineage appears in the front row. In it I
[613] recognize Popo (Lapé), Poopu (Dipélu II, Kormotibo), Tafanié (Papaïston). The one who is speaking is a foreigner passing through, a very aged and respected Djuka.

[782] The elders invoke Masa Gadu and the ancestors in general, asking them to protect them from adversity in the future; then the offering of water and tafia takes place (no cane juice). I notice that a little is poured on each of the secondary fraga tiki erected for the sake of each one of the ancestors who pursue another lineage with their kunu. That lasts about a quarter of an hour.

764 Next someone goes to ask the deceased to whom she
787 bequeaths the Papa gadu god which manifested itself in her;
776 for the gods are bequeathed like the rest of the inheritance,
428 even if those concerned are divinities which exercise the kunu
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/168 cont./

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against the lineage. The god ratifies this legacy or not; in general it follows, they say, the wishes of its bearer and manifests itself some time afterward in the designated heir.

The coffin is placed on the heads of two men: Tafanié puts the questions with authority. He begins first by making sure of the passivity of the bearers, invites the dead woman to push their heads forward to say yes, to give them an impulse from right to left to say no.

The coffin advances and draws back several times; its weight is at the limit of what the two men can support. Two secondary bearers help the rear bearer, preventing the coffin from falling.

[613]
[621]

1. /Footnote at bottom of p. 168; no reference to it on the page/ Let us recall that this lineage, too few in numbers to constitute a separate social unit, lives with the Awara Bakka, with whom it has no connection through kinship or alliance.

The dead woman suddenly leads her bearers across the village. We see it come back /169/ a quarter of an hour afterward, accompanied by a woman of about 35 years, Moni, in front of whom it stopped.

Tafanié asks whether it wishes to leave its god to her; the dead woman confirms. Upon the statement of this legacy Moni's face reflects no gladness at all, nor any fear.

They explain to me that the designated heiress can in no way refuse this legacy. She must immediately begin her instruction given by a teacher, in order to become a suitable bearer. The expenses of her instruction are borne by her lineage.

764 /169 cont./
787 They will be paid when the gita has been "arranged," that is,
● 776 has lost the bestial character of the beginning and when the god
428 can express itself in intelligible fashion.

There and then they busy themselves with transferring
764 the god out of the body of the deceased. An ɔbiaman well
787 known in the cult of the Papa gadu, Goutu (Dju) and his pupil
789 Balan (Aw.B.) come with calabashes containing infusions of
leaves. Four or five women having a Papa gadu come and line up behind them. The heiress, with an extremely vexed air, takes her place among them, clothed with the emblems of the god of the dead woman; they are going to call their gods who will dance in honor of Kotoïda's god.

The ɔbiaman and his pupil for several minutes trickle the infusion of herbs over the coffin, using packets of herbs like sponges, then they "wash" the women, including the postulant; he gives them the rest of the calabash to drink. One of the women, Samabun, falls immediately to the ground, attacked by the lowest form of possession: she drags herself on her belly like a snake (these are the first forms of the gita when it has not yet been "arranged." In her case that has lasted four years, contrary to what ordinarily happens. The scene was certainly anticipated, for she had put on European panties. The other women also drink but are not possessed; they leave to dress for dancing.

[534] The agida drum taken out of the god's chapel begins to
beat, accompanied by two apinti.

The female bearers of Papa gadu arrive at the sound of the agida, smeared with pemba and carrying /wearing?--Tr./ the insignia of the god. Six come in all. They are not in a state of possession; only two will reach it. The first possessed woman keeps crawling on the ground, gropingly approaching the drum which she embraces, lying on her back. It is torn away from her. The ɔbiaman continue to come to "wash"

/189 cont./

428 Example: When △ Atikati (Dju, E18) died in 1953, about 75 years old, his house went to his sister Adyidya (E19), his gun to Kéwénu (G10), his boat to his classificatory sister Aliki (E23), aged 85.

602 Upon the lifting of mourning for Atikati, it was Aliki, by reason of being the eldest of the surviving classificatory sisters, who distributed his personal belongings and his money; for example, an iron bracelet went to Sosoman (E14) (1).

1. See the genealogical table of the Dju lineage.

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602 By seeing the division of this inheritance on the genealogical table, one realizes that classificatory kinship is not a useless word and that in fact, within the matrilineage (bee), the division is made strictly at random, without consideration of sex, age, or proximity of kinship, which is strictly normal, given the divinatory procedure used.

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● 776
602 An analogous conclusion comes out of the study of the inheritance of gods; the Papa gadu god of the ancestress ○ Sapiké (D5) passed into Pamasa (E28), her kin in the seventh degree. Likewise the god Ampuku of △ Agosbuchi, passing from a man to a woman, went /190/ to Cabesa (G45), his kin in the tenth degree at least (Agosbuchi could not be placed with certainty on the genealogical table). The Kumanti god of △ Antinon (D9) went to Achiké (F13).

428 Study of the inheritance of houses leads to analogous conclusions.

The only case where a certain systematization is seen to appear is that of inheriting from women having adult children. It seems (but this is not a legal principle) that these children receive the essential part of the inheritance.

/193 cont./

778
824 A currently widespread idea about animism would lead one to think, for example, that before felling a tree a Refugee Black addresses words and offerings to it. That is entirely absent from his thought: either this tree is likely to serve as support for a god, in which case it can be touched only after complex rites having the aim of transferring the god elsewhere, or it is simply a tree, and one cuts it down without further ado.

784
825 One very clear aspect of these conceptions is the dagu kunu, a curse resulting from the killing of a dog. Any animal may be killed with impunity but not a dog, because "a dog is almost a man."

[613] At the opposite extreme from the true kunu, a curse extending to a whole lineage, the dagu kunu applies only to the guilty person and draws only limited misfortunes upon him.

[772] No feeling whatever with respect to the dog enters into this conception, but only the idea that he is placed on a particular plane, near the plane of the human and his level of force.

776 /194/

The Great Gods

The Boni recognize a supreme God, Nana (1), more

1. This term comes from the Agni.

commonly called Masa Gadu, and Kedi Amu, Kediamapon in Kumenti language. He created the lower gods and all that lives on the earth.

793 Here is how the old Boni men relate the myth of the creation of the world:

God created a brother and sister, Adam and Efa. They were twins. He put them in a place where they lived happily without working. But he forbade them to touch the fruit of the custard-apple tree.

/194 cont./

773 One day, the devil came in the form of the serpent dagowe. He told them: "Eat the seeds of this tree and you will know all things like God himself."

Adam allowed himself to be tempted and ate a custard apple, he had Efa eat some of it. He found this fruit good and said: "God had deceived us." His heart changed, he ceased looking at Efa as a sister and united with her. She became pregnant.

Some time afterward, God came upon the earth and saw what had happened. He said to Efa: "Thou shalt bear a child in pain." And to Adam: "Thou shalt eat only what thou hast harvested by the sweat of thy brow." He gave him a stone axe and told him: "Go on the nearby mountain; thou wilt find the seedlings of what thou wilt have to plant henceforth in order to feed thyself."

Efa had two twins whom she again called Adam and Efa, and other children. From these children all men have descended.

[197] [845] This Biblical myth, transposed into the African way of thinking, explains the beliefs of the Refugee Blacks concerning twins. It was two twins whom God created first. Twins are beloved of God and share his nature.

• 776 The idea most generally accepted among the Boni is that Masa Gadu is the source of force from which all living beings derive theirs; men are connected with him through their ancestors.

It happens that Masa Gadu may intervene directly in the lives of men, and in such a case he acts necessarily according to justice, without any magic whatever being able to protect the guilty one. But in most cases he does not intervene, showing himself in that way to be as arbitrary as the lower gods.

776 /194 cont./

[184] The great gods Gwangwéla and Gédéosu of the Djuka are not known to the Boni.

[194] Strictly speaking, no cult of Masa Gadu exists. No edifice is reserved for him, he has no priests, and no collective
776 ceremonies are conducted on his behalf. He is nevertheless
769 constantly present in the religious life of the Boni, associated with ancestor worship. Every ceremony of ancestor worship
776 includes an invocation to Masa Gadu. From time to time, for
769 specific motives such as the illness of a member of the lo,
755 people go /195/ specially to the fraga tiki to invoke Masa Gadu.
[613] The oldest man of the lo officiates, while a younger one pours
[998] a little water and tafia at the foot of the fraga tiki; the elder addresses Masa Gadu in everyday language, in simple terms, in a familiar conversational tone, asking him for the cure of illnesses or the end of calamities. Those present, seated in a semicircle, punctuate the end of the speech with some rhythmical applause, uttering the ritual formula of thanks: "Gaŋ taŋgi taŋgi fi yu, Masa Gadu."

776 *Outside of these ceremonies which hardly go beyond the*
782 framework of the lineage, everyone may address Masa Gadu directly by praying aloud, if, for example, he finds himself alone in the bush and prey to an illness. One never addresses Masa Gadu other than for a specific material purpose. Inner prayer for the purpose of spiritual perfection does not exist to our knowledge among the Refugee Blacks.

776 One applies directly to Masa Gadu when one believes
[755] oneself to be the victim of an iniquitous action (see curse). However, although the Refugee Blacks have a very lively sense of
[784] justice, they never call Masa Gadu to witness for the cruel and arbitrary vengeances (kunu) which the lower divinities are
[812] believed to exercise on them. It is taken for granted that all these divinities do conforms to the role which Masa Gadu has assigned to them and that the suffering they inflict on men is indispensable to the proper working of the universe.

/195 cont./

794 The laws of Odun. The cult of Odun (Odũ) is the keystone of
[181] the social and religious structure of the Refugee Blacks. It is a very secret cult; its rites are not practiced in the presence of outsiders and all curiosity about it meets with frank hostility.
[123] The Boni, who talk rather freely about the cults of possession, are mute on the subject of Odun, and one may spend years among them without even hearing this name uttered.

794 The worship of Odun is common to the Boni and the Saramaka (perhaps this is what explains the trustful relations
184 which exist between the two groupings). Among the Djuka it is replaced by the worship of Gwangwêla (Grantata), which has exactly the same functions and rites.

● 776 Odun is not to be confused with the creator God Nana (Masa Gadu). The myths explaining the relationship of these two entities were not known by our informants, but it is clear that Odun was sent to men by Masa Gadu as legislator and judge.

671 Odun's laws have a profound originality, as much by their content as by the sanctions which accompany them. It is not excessive to speak of a religious and moral doctrine of the Refugee Blacks.

[641] These laws appear in negative form. A certain number of acts and behavior are forbidden to those who have entered the society of the Refugee Blacks by taking an oath which binds
784 them for good and all. Offenders will be punished without the direct intervention of men, by the all-powerful action of Odun, who will kill them or /196/ strike them down with sicknesses. As a general rule, Odun's punishment is death; this is what explains the fear his name inspires.

673 Odun forbids:

[754] --Sorcery, wisi, in the most general sense, that is, any magic action having as its purpose the killing, making ill, and in a general way doing harm to another person.

/199 cont./

787 [171] The phenomena of possession exist among other populations of the Guianas and especially among the Amerindians, but among the Refugee Blacks they have special and well-defined forms.

--For the duration of possession, the ordinary consciousness of the man is totally abolished. When he comes back to himself, he no longer remembers anything and the others present
[191] have to repeat to him what the divinity revealed. This total
loss of consciousness during possession appears to be a very constant phenomenon with the Blacks, in Africa as much as in
[114] America. Professor de Goeje calls attention to the fact that
the Indian medicine man, on the contrary, does not lose /200/ consciousness during his trances and is supposed to receive, himself, the revelations of the spirits.

When a man is possessed by a divinity, in the eyes of the Refugee Blacks he is no longer there; what his body may do is not attributed to him at all. They say: "The gadu does this, says that, dances in such a way." If the gadu hurt someone (but that practically never happens) or broke something, its bearer would not have any responsibility.

787 --The divinity expresses itself in a language peculiar to
198 it; we shall see further on that there are four categories of
divinities likely to become incarnate in men, which corresponds
[776] to four secret languages of which in practice only two are known
by the Boni, at least by the oldest among them.

The bearer of the divinity, in his usual state of consciousness, knows in general this language, which he has learned from a teacher if it is a matter of a possession desired by him and obtained with the help of definite practices.

But there are also numerous cases of unprovoked possession (in the kunu especially) and people state that in this case the divinity speaks its language just as well, although its bearer has never learned it;

/200 cont./

787 --Possession is manifested by kinds of trances called gita or k3mfo, of a varying nature according to the divinity concerned, which sometimes involve phenomena of insensibility and acts impossible to perform in a normal state;

782 776 784 --The first time the divinity enters a man, it imposes a kina (interdiction) upon him which will henceforth be the sign of his function. This is what is called a gadu kina. This kina varies from one divinity to another, but in principle a given divinity imposes the same kina on its divers bearers. The divinity names itself and indicates to its bearer a means of calling it back in case of need: make such-and-such gestures, scatter such-and-such a liquid or powder.

All that is recorded by those present who reveal it to the person possessed when he has come round.

It is taken for granted that the god protects its bearer as
long as the latter respects the laws of its cult and observes its
kina (in the opposite case the god may punish him cruelly).
787 Conversely it is assumed that the man has a certain power, a
776 certain right over the god who possesses him. They say that he
789 is the master of it, masa, word which is habitually used in the
sense "to be the owner of." At his death he can bequeath this
428 god in the forms and according to the laws regulating the inheritance of property. Of course the god is capable of not ratifying this decision, and it is free to manifest itself in anyone it wishes. But they affirm that in most cases it follows docilely the choice of its bearer. We shall see that this inheritance of gods plays an essential role in the functioning of the kunu.

787 181 Apprenticeship for possession. What goals does a man pursue who desires thus to have a gadu? Above all he seeks strength. To succeed in life, to be protected against his enemies, to be respected: Such are the goals generally pursued and openly recognized by the Refugee Blacks who "have a gadu."

/201/

787 181 One also often finds as an avowed goal the idea of being useful to his lineage.

Disinterested mystical impulses appear totally absent from these cults.

787 154 But that is only one aspect of the phenomena of possession; they really seem to be, in large measure, *unconscious* and *involuntary*. Everyone can try to obtain a *gadu*, but everyone does not succeed; one must have a certain predisposition.

789 79 [154] "One cannot oblige a *gadu* to enter a man," say the Boni; it certainly seems, in fact, that in nearly half the cases possession takes place spontaneously and sometimes to the great terror of the person concerned: this is observed especially in the *kunu*.

[776] Mimi, a woman about 46 years old in 1958, of the Kotika lineage, was possessed by two *gadu*, an *Ampuku* and a *Papa gadu*. Here is how her near relatives relate the fashion in which they came into her.

[158] About ten years before, Mimi was showing signs of mental derangement. Her mind wandered, she sometimes used to leave the village to run in the bush at random, she uttered disconnected words (1). Then she fell very ill (pleurisy?).

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[828] [171] 1. It is necessary to note on this subject the very widely held idea among the Refugee Blacks, as among the Creoles, that certain forms of mental imbalance are due to the action of an entity which is trying to manifest itself in a man and does not [755] succeed. In order to cure this man, he must be "washed" with appropriate leaves so that the god can come to manifest itself in him; the rest of the time he will be normal.

787 /201 cont./

791 The elders then consulted the oracles and perceived that Mimi
776 was victim of an Ampuku named Maogan which for a very long
[613] time had been pursung the Kotika lineage with its vengeance
[784] (kunu). In order to protect herself, she sought to have herself
given a more powerful god, and she became the pupil of an
obiaman specialist in the cult of the Papa gadu. In this way she
[982] had a Papa gadu named Ayaémé, divinity of beneficent character to which, in difficult cases, her family applies in order
[346] to obtain advice, protection, and remedies. She had a little
hut built beside her house, where the god goes to rest when it
has finished each of its trips to the country of men. Ayaémé
[784] imposed on Mimi is kina which concerns a fish. But even with
all this she was not rid of her kunu of the Ampuku; and one day,
something it had not yet done, the latter revealed itself in her
[784] and spoke through her mouth. It announced that it would con-
[782] tinue to exercise it kunu against the Kotika lineage. They appeased it by sacrifices of red cloth and beer; since then, it
seems calm and in rather good humor. It comes into Mimi from
time to time and speaks in Saramaka language. They are very
afraid of it, but they do not hesitate to question it and ask it for
[784] remedies, which it sometimes indicates. It laid on Mimi three
gadu kina concerning the acouchy, the agami, and the
armadillo.

791
787
794 Organization of the cults of possession. Strictly speaking, no
religious brotherhoods exist in Boni country; there are only
teachers - bas(2) - who have received their power from another

2. It does not seem advisable to translate this word by "priest." In the minds of the Refugee Blacks, this is a matter of a teacher teaching pupils; they use the same word to designate a European or Creole schoolmaster.

/201 cont./
791 teacher and who teach a small group of disciples - kineki -,
787 without distinction of villages or lineages and under their sole
[794] responsibility; each one, man or woman, is absolutely free to
pursue his teaching.

/202/These teachers are not themselves possessed, but they are believed to know the processes which permit the neophyte to obtain possession with the minimum of risks. They accept the
● [776] fact, however, that that involves dangers, for one cannot oblige a particular gadu to come into someone, and one may in its place obtain an undesirable gadu.

791 Procedures vary according to the categories of gadu sought.
787 But they involve three elements which are always found in one
776 form or another:

--They begin by teaching the pupil the language of the
[198] divinity, or rudiments at the very least (as we shall point out further on, these languages appear to be in decline); these lessons are private;

[824] --On behalf of a group of pupils, the teacher prepares
infusions of certain leaves which are suited to the divinity in question. It is thought that the god likes these plants and that they have the power to attract it.

[788] In certain cults it is required of the pupil to utter at the
same time formulas inviting the god to come into him. But this is not general; in the cult of the Papa gadu especially, the teachers bathe the students in the greatest silence.

791 At the end of the session, the student is often asked to
787 drink a little of the infusion. One might believe that it is a
824 matter of a process having a physical action, certain plants possibly containing hypnotic substances; but except for one aspect of the cult of the Kumenti of which we shall speak later, this does not seem true; especially about the plants believed to attract the Papa gadu, it seems that they have received this role because of their color or odor. Our feeling is that, at least
[562] for the Papa gadu cult which appeals more especially to women, suggestion plays an essential part.

/202 cont./

153 --Pupils are taught, individually or collectively, to dance
791 in the manner of the god. Indeed, each divinity has a charac-
787 teristic form of dance, which it executes sometimes by using
● 776 the bodies of its bearers when it comes into them. The pupil
535 must imitate as best he can the individual movements and the
[868] rhythm of this dance, while the teacher, using the appropriate
drum, beats out the calling formulas.

If the god is satisfied with the student, he will be able to come into him.

791 These exercises appear to have as their goal the creation
787 in the pupils of forms of conditioned reflexes; they have nothing
785 in common with the very harsh ordeals which the medicine man
153 of the Guiana Indians imposes upon himself, and do not involve
any form of asceticism. It does not seem that chastity, even temporary, is demanded of the student, any more than fasting or doing anything contrary to his inclinations.

787 The idea of a spiritual death and resurrection of the
791 possessed person, with all the ritual it entails: long reclusion
of the neophytes, change of name of the one possessed, who is supposed to relearn all the activities of ordinary life, does not appear to have been kept by the Refugee Blacks. In a general
[152] way, the atmosphere of solemn seriousness, /203/ of secrecy,
and of fear, which characterize the Dahomey cults of possession, is not found among them.

791 These lessons are always paid for and are even very
787 expensive. Payment is made in pieces of cloth, in demijohns
435 of tafia.
[436] Having a Kumenti amounted in 1958 to at least 25,000
francs. This payment is not only compensation for the teacher;
[181] it is the mark of legitimacy. What has not been paid for is not,
for the Refugee Blacks, legitimately acquired. We shall come back to this important point later.

/203 cont. /

153 787 791 Possession begins progressively; in the beginning the divinity does not find in its bearer sufficient passivity, it does not succeed well in expressing itself through his mouth, spectators observe only incoherent gestures and hear only unintelligible stammerings. The pupil must continue his training for a long time in order to become a suitable bearer.

789 The god, when it has just entered a man, always begins by rendering homage in its language to Masa Gadu, proclaiming that it acts only in his name and by his will.

[576] [198] Then it greets those present, employing formulas which are the exact transposition into its language of the ordinary Boni formulas of politeness; that even if it is getting ready to speak to them in the harshest manner.

The god speaks then in its language, saying not very intelligible things to the audience that appear to be related to what goes on in its country, to its family (for it is believed that these lower gods have a family). Finally, it begins to speak in ordinary language in order to be understood by those present, and answers questions.

776 787 825 Various categories of gods capable of bringing on possession. The Refugee Blacks assume that four categories of lower gods exist.

The first category consists of a series of gods which present themselves to men under very different aspects but which are nevertheless felt to be of the same nature. All speak the Kumenti language, all are well disposed toward men and do not exercise against them the kunu, that is, the curse;

--The Kumenti, which have the appearance of jaguars and live in the bush;

--The Djadja, which have the appearance of ocelots;

--The Opete, which have the appearance of the urubu and which reside in the air;

/203 cont./

776 --The *Bũnsuŋki*, which have the appearance of Indian
787 women and which reside in the waters of the rivers;
825 The second category is that of the *Ampuku*, much feared
[784] gods of the bush, likely to exercise the *kunu* against men. The
[198] *Ampuku* speak a language which is very well known to the
Saramaka but which nobody speaks in Boni country. When they
wish to be understood, they speak the ordinary Saramaka dia-
lect. They can, it is said, /204/ be seen at night in the bush
in the form of unknown men dressed in the manner of the
Refugee Blacks;

The third category is that of the *Vɔɔdũ* or *Papa gadu*, gods
still more feared, which become incarnate in the boa snake
[198] *dagowe*. They speak the Papa language;

776 Finally, much feared also are the *Kãntamasu*, gods of
787 the termitaries, which speak a language which nobody under-
[198] stands and use the Kumenti language to make themselves under-
stood.

It is important to note that there is not *a* god *Kumẽnti*, *a* god *Ampuku*, etc., as there was in the pantheon of the Ancients *a* god Mars, *a* god Vulcan. For the Refugee Blacks those are generic names like Frenchman, Englishman. Questioned about a phenomenon of possession, they will answer: "It is *Ampuku* who makes," but in the same way they would say in front of a boat: "It is Saramaka who makes."

776 The relationships between these gods and their animal
787 form are obscure. For the *Vɔɔdũ* it is clear that people believe
825 they really live in the *dagowe* snakes, since the accidental
death of one of these snakes in the burning of a clearing is con-
sidered a calamity which risks bringing a *kunu*. But that does
not prove that a divine character is attributed to the snake
itself. As for the *Kumẽnti*, there does not appear to be any
precise bond between the genie and its jaguar appearance. If
one meets a jaguar, one may fire on him all the same without
inconvenience. If he is the support of a *Kumẽnti*, the shot will
not be able to touch him, the god will not get angry about it.

/204 cont./

776 This shows that in the minds of the Refugee Blacks, the
787 animal is simply a prop for the god. The god borrows this body
825 in order to manifest itself, but it is not bound to it by nature.
These conceptions are totally contrary to those of the Indians,
who tend to personify in their minds the beings and phenomena
of nature.

776 As we have said, the Boni do not see these gods since the
787 person possessed loses consciousness. But in the time of the
ancestors, there were people who used to see the gods, and it is
through them that their present-day descendants have an idea
of their appearance; on the other hand, certain gods such as the
Ampuku and the Būnsuŋki may be seen in dreams.

Sometimes the residence of this or that god is known, for
it has revealed it through the mouth of its bearer; the god's
[823] name is then given to that place. For example, at the mouth
of the Abounami there is a fall named Ma Akoti Gadu Sula.
It is there that the god resides which revealed itself in olden
days in an old woman named Akoti.

776 Connections with the group of relatives. The idea of a god
613 protector of the lineage, whose worship, brought by the founder
of the group, is regarded as indispensable to the life of the
collectivity, is not found clearly among the Refugee Blacks.
There are actually many divinities which have entered the
lineage and which are worshiped collectively. But these divinities
[784] are intruders; they have penetrated into the group by
force in order to exert an inexorable vengeance against it.
[782] People do not apply to them to ask for protection, and they are
worshiped only because they cannot be expelled.

776 /205/ There is not believed to be any kinship tie between the
602 gods and men, nor any tie of a systematic or exclusive character.

/205 cont./

776 Still, they assume that the gods that have entered a
613 matrilineage tend to be transmitted within this group. If, for
428 example, a woman is possessed by a Papa gadu, at her death
[787] she must bequeath it in the same way as her property, and she
can bequeath it only to someone of her lineage.

We have seen in studying the transmission of the god of Kotoïda († 1956), that only the women of the Afi lineage to which she belonged could inherit.

776 Even if the god is not bequeathed, which sometimes
613 happens, if it exercises the kunu, it will manifest itself sooner
984 or later in a member of the lineage. But long years may pass
before it shows itself. This conception is absolutely clear to
the Refugee Blacks, and furthermore, if it did not exist, the
[114] idea of the kunu would be without support. People have there-
[428] fore wrongly believed in a transmission of gods from father to
son.

346 Material organization of cults. A material organization of the
787 cults of possession exists within the limits of the localized
794 lineage (lo). This organization is completely independent of
613 the apprenticeship of these cults. It permits the members of
the lineage to easily practice cults they have received anywhere,
on their own responsiblity.

In each lo there exists in general one single chapel (obia ɔsu) for all the divinities of the same category.

For example in the Awara Bakka lo quarter in Asisi (140 persons), for about 15 women having a Papa gadu, there exists only a single one. There is an obia ɔsu for the Ampuku (three or four possessed persons) and another for the Kumɛnti (about ten possessed people).

The chapel of the Papa gadu is placed under the responsibility of the head of the lo. On this subject it is to be noted that the individualized lineages Aw.B.3 and Afi, which however have separate gods, are included in this organization.

776 /206 cont. /
787 The Kumɛnti. These gods are common to the Saramaka
[184] (Kromenti) (1), Djuka, and Boni. The Kumɛnti are considered
to be benevolent gods and friends of men, so their possession
is very much desired. They do not come into men spontaneously,
they are obtained only by applying to a teacher. In principle
[562] only men can obtain Kumɛnti, while on the other hand only
women can have Bǔnzunki /sic/.

776 The Kumɛnti are specialized in protection against fire
787 and against machete and gun wounds. These dangers hold the
751 largest place among the anxieties of the Refugee Blacks, who
spend almost all their life in the bush and with whom nearly
[789] all sores become infected and have serious consequences. Thus
the Kumɛnti cult holds an important place in their magic; even
someone who is not possessed will try to obtain from these gods
an ɔbia that will protect him from these various dangers.

153 The instruction of the disciples of these gods takes as its
791 pattern the procedures described above, but the collective dances
787 appear to play an essential part. The teacher calls on the gods
786 by beating a special rhythm on ordinary drums (apinti) and by
[533] uttering invocations punctuated by the rattle of the saka (Indian
[534] maraka, that is, hollow calabash provided with a handle and
containing seeds).

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[174] 1. There is no doubt about the origin of this word; it is a deformation of Coromantin, name given in the 18th century to Ashantí country. The "Coromantin Negroes," reputed to be particularly intractable, played a large role in the slave revolts. The Kumenti cult of possession must originally have been a cult peculiar to the Coromantin nation.

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153 In proportion as the pupil perfects himself, the god ex-
791 presses itself more easily with the help of his body, begins to
787 do coordinated acts and to speak. They say that the gita has
[195] been "arranged" (seeka). The Kumɛnti speak with a gruff, jerky voice, characteristic, which humorists love to imitate in the evenings' recitals.

In order to call on his gita voluntarily, the pupil crouches down, feet together, throwing pamba from right to left at the level of his feet and uttering the formula: "O Kumɛnti, djumpo ku a mi." Then he remains immobile in this position and waits; possession takes place generally at the end of a few minutes.

● 776 The Kumɛnti which enter thus into men are exclusively
787 male gods; it is known that they have wives because they talk about them, but they never manifest themselves.

[812] The Kumɛnti are generally benevolent; still, no more than any divinity of the Refugee Blacks, do they represent a principle of goodness and justice in itself. They watch in a partial fashion over the interests of their bearers. Thus it is that A..., of the Dipélu II lo, has a Kumɛnti which reacts in a violent way when it has the impression that danger threatens
[158] its bearer. It enters into him suddenly, takes a machete and storms through the village, while people prudently barricade themselves in their houses.

787 In certain circumstances, when their trances are particu-
781 larly intense, the people possessed by Kumɛnti are capable, it is said, of walking in fire, dancing on broken glass, climbing thorny awara palm trees, and even having themselves struck with blows of a machete without any wound resulting from it. Professor de Goeje gives impressive personal testimony on this subject, such as the case of a possessed man who overturned a pail of boiling water on his body (1). Mr. Mathieu, Director of

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1. In a note in Mr. W.F. van Lier's work, § 37.

/209 cont. /

787 If someone has a Kumɛ̃nti, certain objects used in the
784 cult: pestle, mortar, machete, must not be raised near him. His gita "would rise" immediately. Likewise while he is eating, neither tiger nor gun must be mentioned. To prevent their gita from rising, those concerned may take the precaution of putting a small piece of wood behind the ear while they eat.

787 These past years the cult of the Kumɛ̃nti was clearly
178 declining among the Boni, as was the whole of their religious
[771] life; every one, indeed, no longer thought about anything but
[781] earning money and was always traveling in order to do this,
[484] which made difficult the indispensable meetings and dances.
[743] On the other hand, cared for effectively when they are ill in
[755] the Maripasoula hospital, the Boni feel the cult of the Kumɛ̃nti less necessary, of which the principal social function is to cure. So, while in 1948 we used to be present very often at manifestations of the gita of Kumɛ̃nti, in 1952 they were becoming much rarer and more secret /modest/. They were tending to fall to the level of the latent manifestations of which we shall speak further on. In 1956 we did not observe in the course of the forest
[346] work any spontaneous attack of this gita. The chapels dedicated to the Kumɛ̃nti are scarcely maintained and are falling into ruins; such is the fate of the gods judged benevolent toward men.
[751] Nevertheless people continue to lay great store by the ɔbia of Kumɛ̃nti, especially the man nɛŋge ɔbia which protects against the machete and the gun, and the Kumɛ̃nti bui, ring of Kumɛ̃nti, instrument of divination.

776 The Bũnsuŋki. The Bũnsuŋki are gods which live in the waters,
[823] by preference at the head of falls, beside rocks bearing copses of detached trees; they can also reside ordinarily in these trees
[787] themselves. They appear sometimes in dreams to men as well as to women in the aspect of Indians, more commonly Indian women with long hair. This is why they are sometimes called wata Iŋgi, Indians of the water.

776 /209 cont./

[778] [782] wata Iŋgi. Indians of the water. In certain spots, people have known since the time of the ancestors that there resides such a Bũnsuŋki, whose name they know; when they pass there, they address a prayer to it while making a sacrifice of tafia.

776 171 (The Bũnsuŋki must not be confused with wata mama, the mama-of-the-water of the Creoles, a dreaded divinity but one which the Boni do not appear to worship. The wata mama lives at the bottom of deep holes in river beds and never allows her face to be seen; she sometimes abandons one of her long hairs on the rocks and he who finds it becomes sick).

776 787 [562] [789] /210/ The Bũnsuŋki can enter into human beings, exclusively, it seems, into women. They give a different gita from those of the Kumɛnti. The possessed person dances at the edge of the water, then swims and dives for a long time. They affirm that if its possession is sufficiently intense, the genie carries the possessed woman along to the bottom of the water, where she stays for a very long time without any harm! That is supposed to have happened especially in Asisi village to a woman named Dabisa.

Possession by the Bũnsuŋki is not frequent. In 1952 it was known in Boni country in only three women.

[562] [788] [782] As for men, they may perceive these divinities in dreams and receive benefits from them. For that they go to the place where it resides and bathe, uttering an invocation: "O god, watch over me, protect me, come to me at night when I sleep, speak to me, act so that I may not be sick, so that I may get well." The following night, the divinity will come in a dream, demand a sacrifice (beer in general), say that it /grants/ the prayer.

776 The Vɔɔdũ (1). These are gods much feared for their evil

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1. This word is obviously
a deformation of the Dahomey
word vodũn.

/210 cont./

776 character, touchy and vindictive. In speaking of them one
[976] says *Papa gadu* (*papa* does not mean "father"; it is a term of respect used for important personages (2)). They are believed

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2. This is the interpretation given by the Refugee Blacks. However, 18th-century documents on the origin of the slaves draw attention to the existence of an African tribe called Papa. Allusions contained in documents of the archives of Surinam, recently studied by Madame Silvia W. de Groot, would tend to identify the Papa with one of the populations of present-day Dahomey. In this hypothesis, the cult of the *papa gadu* would represent an archaic form of the Dahomey cult of the snake gods.

776 They are believed
[825] to have as habitual bearers the boa snakes (*dagowe*) (3) which

3. This word appears to be the deformation of the Dahomey word *dãgbe*.

are not to be confused with the great water snakes (anaconda)
[824] that the Refugee Blacks call *mboma sineki*. They may also reside in silk-cotton trees (kankan tree) and in the trees called *katu udu* (Bombax surinamiensis).

[787] The *Vɔɔdũ* which incarnate themselves in humans may be of either sex; if a male god is concerned, it is called "*tata vɔɔdũ*."

/210 cont./

776 The *Bumba gadu*, other gods of the same nature and
[825] equally feared, have as bearers other categories of snakes, principally the great anaconda water snakes.

[784] The *Vodũ*, we have said, are feared; they can exercise
on a lineage the collective curse called *kunu*. But, no more
[812] than the *Kumẽnti* do not represent a principle of good, they do not represent a principle of evil. Not all are so badly disposed toward men, and even if one of them is the enemy of a lineage, it is not for that reason badly disposed toward the rest of men.
787 However this may be, the cult of possession of the *Papa gadu* is
178 not at all in decline among the Boni. According to the cross-
562 checking we have been able to do, of the 670 persons living on the French bank there are at least 40 to 50 who have a *Papa gadu*, the great majority of them old women.

787 /211/ The *Voodũ* /*sic*/ are much feared, and for that very reason
784 much respected. They are oracles which are consulted very often, without consideration of the evil their *kunu* has done and will still do. A god which exercises the *kunu* but which is provisionally declared appeased may be consulted without danger; it is always assumed that in any case its bearer, if he respects its commands, has nothing to fear from it.

787 It is possible that, very unconsciously, women use the fear
562 that the *Papa gadu* gods inspire in order to maintain their independence and privileged position in Refugee Black society.

153 Instruction in possession appears to take as a pattern the
791 same principles as that which correspond to the *Kumẽnti*. It
787 involves the teaching of the Papa language; this language ap-
[198] peared to us to be in decline; in fact, it is used only for formulas
[178] of greeting; then the possessed people vaticinate in ordinary language. Instruction in possession also involves daily ablutions
[515] with decoctions of leaves; certain of these mixtures are par-
[824] ticularly complicated (it is said that they include more than a hundred different kinds of leaves). Instruction is essentially in-
[534] dividual; however it also includes dances; on this occasion a

787 531 /212 cont./
can read these messages; but we have not turned up any precise evidence on this subject (1).

1. These signs are very little systematized and have no relation whatever with the symbolic designs which figure in certain rituals of possession, especially in Dahomey and Haiti. It is permitted to see in them a simple likeness.

787 [758] [753] The Papa gadu are chiefly consulted to ask them to reveal the cause of misfortunes that happen. One of them is not asked to cure an illness unless the interrogation reveals that it brought it on.

● 776 648 [782] [171] [778] The worship of the Papa gadu snake gods makes a strong impression on the West Indian Creoles who maintain regular relations with the Refugee Blacks. Most consider it as diabolical in nature and disapprove of it, but if the presence of an "adder" (anaconda snake) is noted in a neighboring creek, and if at the same time misfortunes occur, it happens that a Creole may go to ask the Refugee Blacks to practice rites to mollify the vengeance of the god. We have happened to catch sight of, hidden in a copse behind the habitation of a gold miner, a small altar decorated with blue and red pennants, the usual place of worship of the Papa gadu.

755 [787] [164] Observation in Boniville, November, 1952.

An Aluku woman, Tini, comes to Boniville to consult her adoptive daughter Pamasa, about 35 years old, who is possessed by a Papa gadu named Adawa. Fémi, 15 years old, Tini's son, has been sick for several days (fever, eruption all over the body). When someone comes to get us, the god has already entered into Pamasa, has sat down in a hut, and

/*214 cont.*/

787 their legs with this white clay; they prophesy in a singing tone, without the usual voice of their bearer's ceasing to be recognizable, expressing themselves in the Saramaka language.

796 The *Ampuku* have the appearance of men similar to Blacks, but unknown. They reside in the depths of the woods; some are good, others bad. One can gain their good will by [814] worshiping them, which is especially developed in Saramaka country.

796 535 [103] Baliki, of Kormotibo village, tells of having been present one day at a dance of the *Ampuku*, when he was traveling to the Saramaka village of Baien.

"During the day, people went on the paths far into the bush to put down calabashes containing certain herbs. At night were seen to come out of the forest a large number of unknown men, dressed in the manner of the Saramaka. They danced all night, and at dawn left again as they had come."

776 [789] [824] The *Ampuku* gods, considered to be maleficent gods of the bush, exercise their influence on everyone. When a person has slept in the bush, he "washes" himself free of *Ampuku* with an infusion of leaves of five plants which are part of the secondary flora surrounding the villages and of which the principal plant is the *sangaafu* (*Costus cylindricus*).

791 787 *Frequency of possession.* In 1956 teachers or *bas* were very scarce in Boni country. For the *Kumenti gods*, only S... (Kotika) remained; for the *Papa gadu*, since the death of Antinon (*Dju*), there remained only M... (Papalsson) and B... [619] (Asisi). People were commonly going to receive instruction from Djuka teachers in the villages of the Tapanaoni.

787 562 It would be a great error to believe that nearly all the men have gods. On the contrary, this is an exception. According to the evaluations we were able to make, there is not more than one adult man out of six or seven who is possessed.

/214 cont./

562 On the other hand, possession is much more frequent among
789 women: it can be estimated that on the average, one adult
woman out of three or four has a gadu.

162 For example in Boniville, out of 115 persons including
776 about 70 adults, one reckons about 30 gods including 8 to 10
787 Papa gadu, 8 to 10 Kumɛnti, 1 Bunsunki, and 2 Ampuku.

791 Apprenticeship for possession can begin from adult age,
787 but it seems /215/ that in general it is between 35 and 50 that
561 women take heed of obtaining a gadu. Would that not be, very
unconsciously, the desire to stay in the limelight and indirectly
562 to keep a hold over men, once the age of sensual attraction is
past?

787 Possession continues for life, and it is out of the question for a god to be transmitted before the death of its bearer. For example, in 1957, the centenarian grandmother in Asisi village, Kuluba, still kept her Papa gadu god. She had not participated any more in the dances of possession for long years, but her gita was always consulted.

But it can happen, if a possessed person stops taking part in dances and practicing the rites that have been shown him, that any manifestation ceases at the end of a few years.

We observed that in B... of the Dipɛ́lu Li lo, in 1948 and 1949. He used to exhibit strong attacks of the gita of Kumɛnti. He stopped his instruction, finding that it was costing too much and was taking time. In 1952 he exhibited only latent manifestations of his gita at rare intervals. In 1956 nothing was any longer observable.

787 It can happen, on the other hand, that attacks of pos-
789 session become so frequent and so strong that the person concerned risks losing his reason; if it concerns a god which did
not come of its own initiative, one can try to expel it. In
[824] order to "wash" someone free of a gita, he is made to pass
between two rows of ɔbiaman who hold dry palms, pina tɔ̃ŋgo,
in their hands and utter adjurations.

/221 cont./

Relations between Gods and Men

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The kunu

The kunu. The Refugee Blacks call kunu the collective curse which has weighed on a matrilineage since an ancient offense. The kunu is without time limit, without pardon, without pity, blind in the choice of its victims; in principle, it can end only with the complete extermination of the lineage. Each time [753] [761] that adversity swoops down on one of its members in the form of death, sickness, various calamities, the kunu is the most frequently obtained explanation. The instrument of this inexpiable vengeance is either a god or the yɔrka (spirit) of a dead person.

784 613 171 This notion, which occupies a central position in the beliefs of the Refugee Blacks, does not appear to have been borrowed directly. Most of the populations of Dahomey /222/ and the Ivory Coast take for granted the idea of arbitrary punishments exercised upon the members of the lineage by the gods or the ancestors of the group. But no population of these regions has, to our knowledge, developed so highly systematized a doctrine.

784 571 The conceptions developed by the Refugee Blacks, divinities impelled exclusively by vengeance, and especially ancestors inexorably chastising lineages other than their own, have created new relationships among individuals and among lineages.

784 We have not been able to elucidate the origin of the word kunu. Perhaps it is a deformation of the Mina word ekunu, which means burial.

776 784 781 Three categories of divinities can pursue men with their kunu, and because of this fact the Refugee Blacks feel toward them an extreme terror mixed with veneration.

/222 cont./

776 --The Papa gadu (Vɔɔdũ). The kunu that one of them
784 exercises upon a lineage comes uniformly from the fact that in
613 times past, one of the ancestors had inadvertently killed a
[825] dagowe snake (boa), usual bearer of the Papa gadu. For example, the snake might have perished in the burning of a clearing.
[789] Some time after, the god had possessed a member of the lineage and revealed that henceforth it would exercise a kunu;

--The Ampuku. The kunu of an Ampuku begins in an analogous way; in days gone by an ancestor had, for example, cut a katu tree without performing the rites suitably, or had made a clearing in a place where an Ampuku was residing;

--The Kɔ̃ntamasu (who call themselves Akɔlo), gods of the termitaries, much feared, may exercise a kunu if, before cutting a clearing, someone has, in spite of all his searching, allowed a termitary to escape him, which thus was not the object of the indispensable rite;

775 --Finally, the kunu may be brought by a dead person's
784 yɔ̃ka. For example, a man of lineage A had once upon a time
613 unjustly accused a man of lineage B. The latter committed
762 suicide out of revenge. The meaning of this act is not the same as in Europe. It is not a question of making one's enemies live in shame and remorse, but by sacrificing one's life to cause an eternal vengeance to be wreaked upon one's enemies. Some time after the suicide, the yɔrka reveals itself in a man of his lineage and announces that it will pursue the members of lineage A eternally with its kunu.

784 Thus the offenses which the kunu punishes are not moral sins as we understand them, but involuntary acts without inner meaning. The purifications and sacrifices demanded are likewise purely exterior acts.

/224 cont./

784 Kunu of the Dju lineage. The Dju lineage in 1958 was affected
613 by four kunu:

776 --An Ampuku which has exercised its vengeance since
787 time immemorial, to the point where the origin of this kunu
is no longer remembered, its bearers being Dabisa (G25) and
Adyidya (E19), two women about 50 years old. This Ampuku
formerly had as its bearer an ancestor named Agoabuchi, who
died about 1940. Two or three years after his death, it manifested itself in Dabisa;

--A Papa gadu named Adawa which has also pursued the lineage with a pitiless vengeance since the time of the great ancestors. It revealed itself to the preceding generation in an ancestress named Sapikê (D5), and a long time after her death it passed into Pamasa (E26), a woman of 35. This kunu has grown worse since /225/ two other Papa gadu revealed themselves in recent years in two women named Kulina (F9) and Diana (E9). They declared that they were the descendants of the first one and that they came in support of it;

784 --A yɔrka whose name nobody wanted to tell us because
613 they were so afraid of it. It is that of a man of the Awara Bakka
775 lineage, who committed suicide two or three generations ago
787 when he was unjustly accused of a crime by a man of the Dju
[762] lineage. Since then, this yɔrka has been exterminating the Dju
lineage little by little. Its bearer in 1958 was an old woman
of the Awara Bakka lineage, named Namu;

784 --A Kantamasu since, a very long time ago, an ancestress
613 whose name is forgotten inadvertently destroyed a termitary
776 while burning a clearing. It had as bearer a very old woman
787 named Wima (E3) († 1957), and it manifested itself also in
Ata (F2).

784 Thus, in this group, the maleficent gods had exclusively
613 women as bearers; out of about 20 adult women, seven were
787 participating in the functioning of the kunu.
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/225 cont./

784 613 787 562 One sees from this example how the influence of women, exerted in arbitrary fashion, in a domain placed outside of custom and ordinary social life, weighs on the life of the group.

787 614 571 [484] [955] *Kunu of the Dipélu lineage*. The situation of the Dipélu lineage with respect to the *kunu* is particularly interesting. Although split for perhaps 100 years into two separate groups, Dipélu I (L'Enfant Perdu and Apatu villages) and Dipélu II (Kormotibo and Asisi-Dip. II villages), this group still constitutes an undivided unit with respect to the *kunu*. Neither time nor distance (it takes more than a week of traveling to make the round trip between L'Enfant Perdu and Apatu) has been able to break it up. The Apatu people come very often (at least some of them) to be present at the collective prayers which take place at L'Enfant Perdu to appease a *kunu* in order to cure a sick person.

787 614 776 [787] [761] [753] The oldest *kunu* ("since Africa") is that of a *Papa gadu* god whose bearer was ○ Dika (Dip. I. D10, † 1951) and which passed after her death into ○ Péêchina (Dip. I. E42, L'Enfant Perdu village). This *kunu* strikes indiscriminately the people of L'Enfant Perdu, Apatu, Kormotibo, Asisi-Dip. II, and the Dipélu fraction residing in Boniville. To it, these past years, have been attributed the death of ○ Way (Dip. I. E6, living in Boniville), the illness of △ Akwali (Dip. II. F7, Kormotibo village) and of ○ Bongo (same village).

787 775 614 [623] Another very old *kunu* is the one exercised by the *yɔrka* of a Surinam Creole who had settled with the Dipélu people a very long time ago. He was suspected of sorcery and killed. Since then his *yɔrka* comes back regularly to exterminate the Dipélu.

/225 cont./

784 795 614 787 Having no known lineage (his family, if he had any, was in Surinam), it had taken people of the Dipélu lineage as bearers. The last was △ Denis † in 1938. Since Denis' death, it no longer has a bearer. The questioning of the dead reveals that they died by its kunu. The members of the two fractions of the lineage meet together (at least two or three members of each village come) to supplicate it. [782]

784 614 A third kunu, very interesting in origin and supposed action, /226/ in 1957 was borne by Kwau (Dip. I. E1, Kotika village). It results from the killing of an anaconda snake by Apatu † (Dip. I. C1), companion of the explorer Crevaux when he was traveling to /in/ Brazil. Upon contact with Europeans Apatu had become a freethinker and was no longer observing the laws of his people. Among the later victims of this kunu was counted Kwami (Dip. II. F4, Kormotibo village) who, gravely ill, had had to go to L'Enfant Perdu where the god had been invoked for him and offerings made. The death of Manga (Dip. I. E5, Boniville, † about 1930) was particularly attributed to it. [153] [155] [161]

No other kunu has revealed itself in Apatu village since its founding in 1882.

784 614 776 787 562 A fourth kunu concerning all the Dipélu has as bearers women of the Dipélu II group. It results from the inadvertent murder of a Papa gadu whose bearer was a dagowe snake killed in the course of the nivrée /fishing/ of a pool by Akonté † (Dip. II. B1), transmitted to Kondo †, then to Alama (Dip. II. E1).

Since then Papa gadu have revealed themselves in ○ Apalta (Dip. II. F9, Kormotibo village) and in ○ Kaaia (Dip. II. G28, Asisi-Dip. II village). They declared themselves to be the descendants of the first and to come in support of it.

/226 cont./

628 The members of the Dipélu lineage did not believe a
614 word of this affair, convinced that Kiboya, a proud and scheming
784 woman, had pretended the gita to make herself interesting.
787 Nevertheless, to bring back peace, they decided to go to Asisi
156 and to ask pardon in front of the fraga tiki, pouring tafia,
769 asking the ancestors not to take vengeance, the living being
778 reconciled.

784 /227/ (Note that in this affair, the yɔrka manifests itself in a
614 member of the lineage on which it exercises the kunu.)
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784 Kunu of the Awara Bakka lineage. The Awara Bakka lineage
614 does not form a unit with respect to the kunu, and the situation
613 of its fractions is particularly interesting. This lineage includes:

--A principal fraction (Aw.B.1);

--A fraction whose kinship ties with the first are forgotten (Aw.B.2), whose position with respect to the kunu we have not been able to define.

--Finally, a group descended from Anèta, Djuka woman, wife of Pééyon † (Aw.B.1) settled in Asisi with her descendants in uterine line. We have called this group Aw.B.3. It has a separate kunu originating in the Djuka village of Tabiki where Anèta came from.

784 The Awara Bakka I, all living in Asisi village, had to
787 our knowledge three kunu in 1957:

● 776 --One exercised by a Papa gadu god, borne up to 1957
613 by ○ Kuluba (Aw.B.1, D1). At her death in April, 1957,
428 she bequeathed it, contrary to custom, to a person of another
fraction, Summa (Aw.B.3). But the god did not ratify this legacy and, in January, 1958, it manifested itself in ○ Léna (Aw.B.1, F52), thus remaining in the same lineage;

/227 cont./

784 --A second, very old kunu is exercised by a yərka of the
775 Dipélu II lo. Gy...., dead so long that he cannot be placed on
787 the genealogical table; it, too, had as bearer a member of the
613 lineage on which it was exercising the kunu. O Akumuyé
614 (Aw.B.1, D17) † 1957.

Thus the Awara Bakka and Dipélu lineages exercise the kunu reciprocally one against the other;

784 --A third kunu of recent origin is exercised by a Papa
782 gadu god which had as bearer in 1957 O Irma (Aw.B.1, E37).
776 It results from the inadvertent killing of a Dagowe /sic/ snake
613 by △ Takwa, Irma's brother. At the end of 1957 this kunu
[789] had yet brought on only illnesses of such a kind that people
[753] could still hope to exorcise it.

784 The Aw.B.3 group has a special kunu of its own and
613 considers itself out of reach of the kunu of the Aw.B.1.

Ankta, originating in the Djuka village of Tabiki, is subject to the kunu of that lineage as are all her descendants in
[782] uterine line. On occasion of serious illnesses the latter have sometimes had to go to Tabiki village to supplicate the kunu.

[776] This kunu is the one of a god borne by Akanté, Ankta's
[787] daughter. In September, 1956, Summa, Akanté's daughter,
[782] was sick. The god revealed that this was its doing. It was supplicated (the other fractions joined the group) and she then got well.

613 Kunu of the Afi lineage. The descendants of Afi † (woman
621 coming from the tribe of the Bakabuchi of Surinam) live for the most part in Asisi in close symbiosis with the /228/ Awara Bakka lineage. They are in a situation analogous to that of Ankta's descendants (Aw.B.3) but, perhaps by the simple fact of their number, they form a more individualized unit.

784 /228 cont./

613 They are the object of three kunu:

● 776 --One exercised by a Papa gadu god whose bearer up into
787 1956 was Kotoïda († Oct. 1956), who bequeathed it to ○ Mani (Afi lineage, d12).

784 --The other exercised by a yɔrka of the Lapé lineage.
775 This kunu dates from about 60 years ago; Alémin (Afi lineage,
613 b3, Kormotibo village), 80 years old in 1957, had when he was young cut a clearing in a place which was found to be an old abandoned Boni cemetery (opposite Maripasoula). Some
[787] time afterward, a yɔrka revealed itself in a woman of the Lapé lineage, saying that it was exercising a kunu against the family of the sacrilegious person.

[761] It is to this yɔrka, whose bearer is M... (L2, Boniville), that the death of Kotoïda in October, 1956 is especially attributed.

--A third kunu is exercised by A.... of the Papaïston 2
[684] lineage. A... had committed pikadu. Surprised by Alémin (Afi lineage), he had paid the latter to obtain his silence.
[762] But Alémin had talked. Dishonored, A... committed suicide with a gunshot; some time afterward his yɔrka revealed itself in Alémin; it exercises a kunu on this lineage.

613 Situation of the other lineages with respect to the kunu. The
614 Papaïston lineage is divided into two groups: Papaïston 1 (the
784 principal one) and Papaïston 2, of which there remain only three living members: two women and one young man. This remainder of a lineage continues to bear its own kunu, which is unique and separate from that of the principal group.

The principal group forms a unit with respect to the kunu.

The Lapé lineage, cut from the point of view of genealogy into two pieces, forms a unit with respect to the kunu. We
[114] have been able to collect only fragmentary information on the various kunu of this village.

/229 cont./

784 the Afi lineage to be thrashed symbolically for not having paid
613 sufficient attention to the warnings of the yɔrka which had
672 already made Kotoïda sick several times: by their negligence
they bore part of the responsibility for Kotoïda's death. Although the Afi and the Awara Bakka live together and regard themselves as members of one community, there was no question whatever of thrashing the Awara Bakka, and that because, not being subject to the same kunu, they bore no responsibility for this death. /230/

Likewise it is taken for granted that the descendants of Anèta (Aw.B.3) do not share the legal responsibility of the Awara Bakka proper (fractions 1 and 2). The fact that Anéta was the wife of Péèyon, captain of the Aw.B., and that her descendants are completely integrated into the life of the village, does not modify this legal situation at all. At the time of the brawl between the Dipélu and the Awara Bakka in 1948, the Aw.B.3 were not taken to task, any more than the members of the Afi lineage.

771 The relations of the Boni with the entities which are believed to pursue them are most interesting. They seek only to appease the divinity, to calm it provisionally, and to live with it in a state of armed peace, if one may say so.

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787 When divination has shown that a certain calamity was due to the kunu (sometimes the divinity in question reveals it immediately, through the mouth of its bearer, before being interrogated), it is asked why it struck: it always indicates a precise reason: usually it appears to be inspired by arbitrariness
[776] and a pitiless despotism. The Refugee Blacks are not surprised at this, for thus it is that they imagine the lower gods.

784 In 1948, A..., of the Dju lineage, fell ill; he felt
787 violent pains in his legs. Divination showed that it was the
776 doing of the Kɛ̃ntamasu, which was exercising its kunu upon

/230 cont./

784 the lineage; questioned, this god declared that it had something
787 to complain about in the bad condition of the house which the
● 776 members of the lineage had erected to it on its order; the roof
of leaves had not been changed and it was raining through.

784 It happens also, but as an exception, that the god has
sanctioned an offense against morals or more precisely, against
684 the social law, such as the breaking of an interdiction, pikadu
(incest in the wider sense, an offense against exogamy). It
is necessary to understand that in the thought of the Refugee
Blacks, incest unleashes the existing kunu but does not create
a new kunu.

In October, 1952, Dolo, a young man of 25 of the
Awara Bakka lo, died almost suddenly. Divination revealed
[787] that he had been killed by the kunu (it was a Papa gadu which
[761] had intervened) in order to sanction an offense committed
[613] some time previously by another member of the lo named P....
The latter, a notoriously depraved individual, had committed
incest with his own sister.

784 When the divinity has made known through the mouth
776 of its bearer the causes of its act, the assembled members of
782 the lineage implore it, ask it not to pursue its vengeance; the
divinity then requires an offering: for example, if it is a
[787] Papa gadu, it will require bottles of beer, some red and white
cloth which will be immersed in a given place in the river.
It may also require dances in its honor, celebrated by the
other possessed people in the village. If it is an Ampuku, it
will demand rum, dark-blue cloth which will be exposed in
a remote place in the forest. An offering of this kind represents a relatively small sum, even for the Boni (several
thousand francs in 1952). The god then declares itself appeased.
But it does not pardon and it will resume /231/ its vengeance
[183] at the first cause. Thus the Boni have hope only in a rigorous
776 observance of customary law and the rites. There are divinities
787 which appeared to be thus appeased for a long time and to

/231 cont./

776 787 which people do not hesitate to come to ask for remedies or opinions, in spite of the evil they have done to the lineage and perhaps will do tomorrow. It is even allowable to wonder whether people do not prefer to consult the most wicked divinities, for they are believed to be stronger.

784 771 114 754 The kunu focuses, turns aside toward high purposes the blind forces of superstition, fear, and rancor. Several authors who have written on the Refugee Blacks have stated that calamities were almost unfailingly attributed to sorcery (wisi). This is a grave error due to the fact that they believed they could transpose to the Refugee Blacks what is observed among the Creole populations of Surinam. If this were true, no [787] positive social bond could exist. We believe we can assert that among the Refugee Blacks divination lays the blame on sorcery in only scarcely a tenth of the misfortunes. Here, 784 (114) among other examples, are several typical cases concerning Boni who worked with us or whom we have known especially well:

[753] [776] --In 1948, Fintiman (Dju) falls ill (violent pains in the legs); kunu of a Kĩntamasu.

[752] --In 1948, Galmo (Papaïston) is accidentally hurt (gun backfire): kunu.

[753] [761] [776] --In 1949, Diolè, captain of the Dju lo, is smitten with hemiplegia and remains paralyzed. He dies in 1951: kunu of a Papa gadu.

761 --In 1950, a Saramaka is killed in a hunting accident (a gun in poor condition went off by itself): Sag naku (accident).

[754] --In 1951, Kanayen (Kotika) drowns while sailing at night on the river: wisi.

[784] [776] --In 1951, Loka (Dju) dies at the age of 70: kunu of an Ampuku.

752 754 775 --In 1951, F. . . (Dju) is seriously hurt by the falling of a branch while cutting his clearing: kunu of a yɔrka.

761 /231 cont./

[784] --In 1952, Dolo (Awara Bakka) dies almost all of a sudden with the symptoms of peritonitis: *kunu*, punishment for [684] incest committed by another member of the lineage.

--In 1952, Maiɛndo, ten years old, son of Osaya (Awara Bakka) accidentally drowns: natural accident (*Sɔgɔɔku*).

[784] --In 1954, Béniti (Dju) dies at nearly 75 years of age: [776] *kunu* of a *Papa gadu*.

[784] --In 1954, Agyémési (Aw.B.) dies almost all of a sudden: killed by Odun (he was a *wisimɛ*). [754]

--In 1955, Tabiki (Awara Bakka) dies at over 80: natural illness.

[784] --In 195 , Kotoida /sic/ (Afi lineage) dies suddenly, [775] aged about 50: *kunu* of a *yɔrka*.

784 --In 1957, F... (Lapé) is gravely ill with symptoms of 776 typhoid: *kunu* of a *Papa gadu*.

[753] --In 1957, Solodo (Dip. II) dies at 40: *kunu* of a [761] *Kɛntamasu*.

75 /232/ One observes that in the 15 cases cited here, the *kunu* 761 interferes ten times, while in three cases natural causes: ill- 784 ness, accident, were assumed.

In reality, the Refugee Blacks do not have the concep- 772 tion of a natural world, subject to known or knowable laws, which is set against a supernatural world. The intervention of a *Papa gadu* is neither more nor less natural than an illness or an accident. There is only, on the plane of human life, more or less frequent intervention by suprahuman forces. 812 The intervention of these forces is made according to laws which embrace the totality of beings and things, laws which men cannot understand but of which they believe they have a partial and empirical knowledge.

/232 cont./

775 It is important not to confuse the *kunu* with the sufferings
784 which other divinities can arbitrarily make men undergo. The
● 776 *kunu* has a systematic character. But a divinity theoretically beneficent, and which has come into a man after being called on, may also from time to time bring misfortunes if such is its whim of the moment.

752 In 1949, G... (Dju) was busy cooking a crab in the
776 house of his mother D... A machete which was fastened to
784 the wall suddenly detached itself and wounded him in the right hand. Now his mother had an *Ampuku* which had imposed
[787] the crab on her as *kina*. This *Ampuku*, immediately called
[428] on, revealed that it really was it which had struck G..., for it did not like to see D...'s son eat crab (note that G... was not at all held to the observance of this *kina*, for no *kina* is transmitted from mother to son).

784 Neither must the *kunu* exercised by a *yɔrka* be confused
775 with the vengeance that a dead person can exercise against
613 the members of his own lineage in order to punish them for
969 having neglected their duties.

Punishment inflicted by an ancestor of the lineage seems for the Boni to be a notion distinct from that of the *kunu*. Vengeance exercised by a *yɔrka* upon its own lineage is regarded as exceptional and devoid of the inexorable and definitive character of the *kunu*, but they assume it to be
[962] possible. They cited to us the case of Yali (Loka), who committed suicide when accused of sorcery by the people
[753] of his lineage. Since then, his *yɔrka* has caused sicknesses
[761] and deaths in his own village.

776 Conversely, a god which exercises the *kunu* upon a
784 lineage may in certain cases intervene in favor of this lineage
613 if such is its whim of the moment. Thus the death of Diamanti
[761] (Aw.8.2, Asisi village, † in 1955) is attributed to the god which exercises the *kunu* on the village of L'Enfant Perdu and whose bearer was Pééchina. Diamanti had wronged someone of this village and the god had intervened against her.

/232 cont./

787 In a general way, they consider that the bearer of a god
784 exercising the kunu has nothing to fear from it personally if he
● 776 rigorously observes the kina which have been imposed upon
him. On the other hand, this god will punish any injury to
[562] its bearer. Thus these bearers (almost always old women) live
[888] surrounded by respect and fear.

784 /233/ Observations in January, 1958 (misfortunes attributed to
769 vengeance of ancestors on their own lineage).
613 Do (Lapé) is taken ill on January 7, 1958 with a violent
75 attack of dysentery. The same day his five-year-old son is
grievously hurt at the wharf by falling on a broken bottle.
[787] Alarmed by this coincidence, the members of the Lapé lo
assemble and proceed to question a possessed person. The latter
reveals that it is the doing of an old woman of the lineage,
Atala, dead for two years. Several lineage members have already been sick from this; the dead woman wanted to sanction
offenses committed by the people of the lineage.

The same day in Boniville, Klémenti (Dju), to whom I
am recounting this affair, tells me that before the lifting of
mourning for his mother Béniti, he and his sisters were sick.
[787] Divination showed that it was the doing of Béniti, who wished
to hasten the celebration of the ceremony.

784 The kunu and social peace among the Boni. Role of the grand
775 man. The kunu exercised by a yɔrka creates very strange re-
613 lations among the Boni lineages. As blind and arbitrary as the
591 vengeance attributed to the yɔrka may be, the Boni have the
sense of the legal unity of the lineage too much for any resentment to exist: "They are killing our family...": and yet the
two lineages find themselves henceforth irreparably bound to-
[782] gether. The victims of the kunu can no longer get along without
people of the lineage of the yɔrka which pursues them with its
vengeance, since they alone, by their prayers, can appease
temporarily the anger of their ancestor. One conceives of the

/235 cont./

787 626 182 571 But divination is more than that; the interpretation it gives of the events of daily life is the very mover of the animistic society; presenting calamities /236/ as the punishment of offenses against customary law, it is constantly vitalizing that law, conserving its practical value and its efficacity. What it expresses is not the hidden influence of chiefs or priests -- there are in fact neither chiefs nor priests among the Boni -- but the very consensus of the group, the deep feeling it has of its unity.

787 There are two large categories of divination:

The first consists of calling on a divinity through the medium of its bearer. For that, one applies to a person (of his [791] lineage if possible) who has a gadu. This is a service which is rarely refused. This person employs the appropriate procedure for calling his gita and enters into trances. The god speaks, the question is put to it; if it is well disposed, it may give the explanation or the advice requested. For example, one asks for advice before looking for another sector to make his clearings.

787 776 Suggestible as the Boni may be, they do not fail to perceive that all the gods interrogated do not give the same directions. So they think that certain ones are stronger than others; there are people whose gita is considered to be particularly [791] good, others whom they have stopped consulting entirely. The defunct head of Kotika village, Bayo, used to have a gita so remarkable that people would come from very far to consult it.

[829] [178] The general opinion is, furthermore, that nowadays everything is degenerating and that good gita are no longer seen as in the olden days.

787 (791) These consultations involve only a very modest remuneration, a bottle of tafia at most (1). If it is not a matter of a

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1. The remuneration of the possessed person is in question; the god always demands a payment for itself, of variable size according to its whim.

/245 cont./

754 766 ground, after scattering the cloths which were covering her, and left without carrying out any rite.

"Next we went to Boniville, the grand man invoked Odun on our behalf, stating that we had only followed his laws and that he had to protect the performers of the job against any distressing consequence."

754 181 178 *Development of sorcery.* Since 1957 Boni country has been passing through a crisis; /246/ fear of sorcery is poisoning village life, while in 1948-50 it was a preoccupation of secondary importance.

[578] That is due to the fact that the rapid growing rich of part of the Boni aggravates jealousies and suspicions. Moreover, these affairs tend to appear in series. Since the case related above (1958), in which a woman, N...., was convicted of having paid a Creole *quimboiseur* to make the grand man die, an affair which strongly impressed the Boni, they tend to see *wisi* in all misfortunes that occur.

[169] In November, 1958 the death of a little girl of 12 of Kotika village was attributed to her uncle Mbomaolo, who had recently emigrated to Surinam and settled in a Creole village. [782] It is believed that he "committed himself," that is, that he sold his soul to the devil (1), which necessitates sacrificing one

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1. This notion, which plays such a large role in West Indian beliefs, has no equivalent among the Refugee Blacks. There is no word in the Boni language for translating the term "committed." They translate thus: *a e suku didibi*, he [776] seeks the devil. The Boni do not have a clear image of the devil, and this notion remains, in fact, foreign to their beliefs.

/247 cont./

789 the object to which is attached a magic force, as well as that
force itself. But there is no confusion in their minds; the object
[755] is only a simple support, it is nothing by itself. The traveler
who sees them prepare an infusion of leaves for a sick person
may be tempted to believe that they attach to this leaf the
power of acting against a certain disease; that would be an
error, they attach to these leaves and to the white clay, pemba,
the power of holding, /248/ of condensing the vital force which
emanated from a certain god. It is the god which "makes
ɔbia," and not men; men do nothing but collect this energy
and apply it.

755 The Boni distinguish two categories of magic remedies:

789 --Those which come from a god through the medium of a possessed person. The god must be consulted each time, and the remedy it gives is effective only for the asker alone, and for a limited time; it can act only when the god has been paid, usually in the form of drink or piece of cloth; in principle nothing is owed to the possessed person (they admit that he benefits by the payment made to the god), but the custom is to give him a bottle of tafia.

Consultation of a possessed person is in the eyes of the Refugee Blacks the normal mechanism by which the Ɔbia descends from the god to men.

755 Certain Ampuku gods might give remedies effective for
976 a particular disease and for any asker, remedies which could be transmitted from one man to another. Unfortunately we could not obtain exact information about this.

755 --Those whose origin is unknown, and which have been
756 transmitted from one man to another for a very long time. It is believed that these are remedies which were found empirically by a man in days past; this is the case with many remedies specific for this or that disease.

In such a case payment is made to the possessor of the remedy and to him alone.

/250 cont./

751 Next in the preoccupations of the Refugee Blacks come the ɔbia called tapu, that is to say, protection. There exist numerous kinds adapted to the various dangers of a supernatural order (protection against other divinities, against the maleficent entities of the bush, against the wisimɛ).

[796] [754] The Ampuku are generally asked for tapu against the wisimɛ. We saw a remarkable one in front of the house of F... (Dju). Its owner was not a little proud of it and he talked about it to us freely.

751 778 [532] The ɔbia, placed at ground level in front of the door, was composed of a crude representation in clay of a head in which appeared two wide-open eyes: in front of it were planted in the ground three plant clusters including a planting of groundnuts and one of maize; the whole was topped by a small basket containing an egg. It was necessary to water the ɔbia with a certain infusion of leaves at regular intervals to restore its force. 751 754 This ɔbia insured infallible protection against wisimɛ; in fact, none of them would have been able to cross the threshold without stubbing his toe on the door frame in spite of all his precautions; F... stated that his ɔbia constituted by this fact an effective means of detection of wisimɛ, for it was enough for him to invite suspects to enter his hut, to know what to think: the wisimɛ refused, for fear of thus being given away in the eyes of all; one could thus at least pin down suspicions.

751 [411] Other ɔbia are called sama mɔfu tesiy (ɔbia against "people's mouths," that is, people's jealousy). They are nearly always seen on fine guns; they have a cord to hold them made of mariti palm fibers, to which two cowries are fastened.

755 The ɔbia intended to treat diseases generally have for support a calabash containing the infusion of leaves and a ball of pemba (kaolin). The person concerned sprinkles himself several times a day with this liquid.

/250 cont./

789 396 There exist special *ɔbia* for the building of boats. The opening of the hull in the fire, a delicate operation, sometimes fails. To insure its success everyone possesses a personal recipe inherited from his father or uncle. It does not call by name and directly upon the action of a god; the Boni do not have a clear idea about the origin or the nature of these rites. It is a matter of a maceration of two or three kinds of leaves, generally belonging to the secondary flora which surrounds the villages, and they vary from one man to another. One pours this maceration over the overturned boat before the burning is begun, while saying: "The boat must not split, it must open well."

832 [673] The laws of Odun forbid the use of charms aimed at forcing the love of a woman one desires; that would infringe on a person's freedom, therefore *wisi*. It is very /251/ possible however that certain people go to get charms of this kind from Creole magicians. But they take for granted, on the other hand, the *ɔbia* believed to permit men who have little success with women to have more in the future.

751 789 There does not seem to be any hierarchy of *ɔbia* nor is one category of *ɔbia* believed to be stronger by nature than another; in fact, the Refugee Blacks are seen to go readily to ask one divinity for an *ɔbia* in order to protect themselves from another. Here is an example:

464 [648] In 1951 the administration had a systematic cleaning of the Petit Inini River begun, in order to rid its course of innumerable pieces of fallen wood which were making the use of motors on boats difficult. A team of Boni were employed in [776] [787] this work under the direction of a Creole foreman. While the work was being done, a *Papa gadu* "came into the head" of an old woman named M.... of the Awara Bakka *lo*. It revealed that it was opposed to this work, for it lived in exactly this 464 776 place and the noise of the motors bothered it. Upon their return to Boni country, the men charged with this work learned the

/251 cont./

464 776 decision of the god and under some pretext or other refused to resume work. In August, 1952, while we were on a work trip /en mission/, an ɔbiamɛ made it known that an Ampuku was

751 791 willing to give a tapu, that is, an ɔbia of protection, against this Papa gadu. We were present at a discussion in the course [465] of which several Boni planned to take up this work again, but asking for raised wages to cover the expenses of the ɔbia (1).

[171] 1. Situations of this kind are common in the Guianan forest, even among Creoles. For difficult or unusual work, the high wages demanded serve in part to remunerate magicians.

751 435 791 These expenses amounted to about 5,000 francs per person, or:

--3,000 for the payment of the god, including red cloth, dark-blue cloth, white beads, beer, rum, cowries; the ɔbiamɛ would take them to set them out in the forest.

--1,500 for payment for the work of the ɔbiamɛ, including a piece of canvas /toile/, beer, a container /bidon/ of powder, a chicken.

751 The remedy would consist of an infusion of leaves with which one should "wash one's body" morning and evening for the duration of the work.

As for the Creole foreman, he prudently had himself assigned to another job.

751 776 They have the habit of asking an Ampuku for protection against a Papa gadu and conversely (we have cited an example of this above), but they do not ask a Kumɛnti for protection; the Kumɛnti occupy themselves only with illnesses.

/253 cont./

Various Beliefs

578 Fyo-fyo. If a Boni is on bad terms with someone of his lineage or of another lineage, he has the absolute right to turn a cold shoulder to him and stop having anything to do with him. But
828 if, hiding his rancor, he seeks, from selfish motives, to main-
753 tain the appearance of friendly relations, he risks falling ill, be-
761 ing struck by various calamities, or even dying from the effect
789 of what the Refugee Blacks call a fyo-fyo. The nature of this
[825] force is not clear; they know only that its support is a small, common insect named fyo-fyo. They declare that if a person dies from the consequences of a fyo-fyo, one of these insects will be seen leaving his body through the nose at the moment of death.

776 Taku sani. By this name the Refugee Blacks designate maleficent
[775] entities of the bush, which they imagine as of nonhuman nature by contrast to the taku yɔrka, wandering spirits of dead people
[753] rejected by society. These entities are lower beings devoid of
[828] consciousness but dangerous for men into whom they may enter, rendering them sick or mad. Certain of these entities are believed to reside in plants, like the kɔtkɔti, others are thought to take on the appearance of dwarfs (baku), whom certain people believe they sometimes see at dawn on the outskirts of villages.

751 One protects oneself against taku sani by special ɔbia, and those who do not feel completely secure take a certain number of precautions in addition, like that of tearing up the leaves they have used for drinking water from creeks.

845 /257/

782 751 This worship is celebrated each time there is occasion to protect newborn babies. They are washed with a certain decoction of leaves.

845 535 751 Every four or five years on the average a big dance takes place, then the father and mother of twins and the twins themselves are washed in order to maintain their powers and keep them in good health.

[784] [753] If these dances are not held, dead twins will show their anger by making living twins and parents of twins sick.

845 613 778 Lineages that do not have twins do not practice these rites. If twins are born to them, they will apply at the place of worship of another lineage.

Papalston and Lapé have this cult particularly highly developed.

842 776 *Tɔne pikin*. It is assumed that a woman may be made pregnant by a river god, either a *Papa gadu* snake god or by the *Wata ingi*, which look like Indians. Children thus conceived are called *tɔne pikin*.

A..., of Papalston, had cut a clearing opposite a remarkable white rock called *Weti stɔ̃*: where she used to moor her boat. She had not had any children for several years [787] [778] [782] and she became pregnant. When her daughter was born a possessed person revealed that she was born of a *Papa gadu* snake god which lived there: since then her parents /relatives/ go regularly to this rock to make offerings.

About 1910 Alama (Kormotibo) had followed her husband to a shipyard on the lower river; one day while walking in the forest she met an Indian having the appearance of a Galibi Indian, who was carrying a newborn baby. She stopped and admired the baby. The Indian said to her: "Do you wish to raise him?" She acquiesced. He said: "We shall see each other again"; then he went away so quickly that she had the impression that he had disappeared on the spot.

/257 cont./

842 A few weeks afterward she found herself pregnant, and
776 it seemed obvious to all that this was the doing of a Wata Ingi.

845 No magic power is attributed to the tɔne pikin, any more than special mental or physical characteristics. But it is assumed that they are the object of a special protection, and that they cannot be harmed with impunity.

771 The sacred character of payment. Relations between the gods
787 and men always have the character of a bargain, among the
435 Refugee Blacks: an irritated divinity is never appeased by repentance or good will; it requires that it be paid; likewise, an ɔbia is of value only for the person who has paid for it. Refugee Blacks will never utilize ready-made magic recipes: uttering certain words, making certain gestures; face to face with such a recipe they will ask immediately: "From what
[912] god does this ɔbia come, and whom must one pay?" It seems that in their conception every transference of a spiritual power or a magic force disturbs something in the proper functioning of the universe; payment restores this equilibrium, it is the
[771] mark of legitimacy. Some Creoles of African ancestry transpose the same idea with respect to Christianity, and this is /258/ why they insist so much on paying for masses and buying
759 558 "orisons" (1). One observes likewise that free medical care lowers the prestige of the doctor in the eyes of all.

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1. Written prayer to which is attached protective power. This notion, borrowed from the rustic magic of 17th-century France, seems to have been introduced into Guiana by the first European colonists.

/258 cont./

461 829 431 On the material plane the same conception explains the high importance attached to fair payment for work done, the holy fury which takes possession of Refugee Blacks who consider themselves wronged; it also explains why they can interpret a free gift only as a mark of weakness except in exceptional cases (present given by a high official on the occasion of a visit). 431 829 A gift which does not have the character of an exchange has no spiritual value for them; it brings only scorn and near hostility, for they feel that the object has not been legitimately acquired and that they are not in tune with their moral law.

Local Divinities

776 823 The Refugee Blacks assume the existence of local divinities exercising a de facto power on such-and-such a portion of the country. Since their very special mode of life leads them to circulate almost exclusively along rivers, with them this idea has been transposed into a double notion: the divinities of the rivers and the gods of the soil. In their minds those are two entirely separate conceptions: the power of the god of the soil stops at the edge of the water and conversely.

De facto worship is rendered the divinities of the river according to the rites set by the first users of the river. In practice, worship is rendered only to the divinities of dangerous rivers where accidents are frequent. People do not bother with the others.

These gods are designated indiscriminately by the words gadu and sapi (thing, being), indicating that their nature is not known.

/258 cont./

776 One of the best known of these gods is that of the Maruini.
823 It is assumed to control all the tributaries of the Maruini as far
778 as their sources. Its place of worship is a thicket situated
downstream from the dangerous Kubi Sula Falls, at the mouth
782 of the river. Before starting to go upriver in August, 1956,
[539] the crews of our three boats, in an atmosphere of great
meditation, lined up behind the eldest of them, who made
the offering of water and tafia, uttering these words: "God
who commands this river, watch over us; keep us from being
sick, let no accident happen to us; if there is on this river
an interdiction which we do not know (2) and which, through
ignorance, we do not observe, pardon us. Bring us back to
our villages safe and sound." The boatmen came one after
the other to make the offering of tafia. The scene lasted more
than a quarter of an hour. This ceremony was not without
nobility, engendering belief in that sincere fervor of animists
so often mentioned in the /259/ ethnographic literature.
771 But our return at the end of our work trip took place in a
completely different atmosphere, showing the strictly practical
and utilitarian side of the religion of the Refugee Blacks.
Once past the Kubi Sula, the three boss boatmen could not
persuade any of their men, who were in the act of eating
their meal, to accompany them as far as the place of worship
to thank the god. Some told us straight out that they were
scoffing at this god from now on, having no intention of
[782] coming back on the Maruini. As for the boss boatmen themselves, they measured stingily the quantity of tafia offered

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2. It is obvious here that this is a case of de facto worship of a divinity about which nothing is known.

/259 cont./

771 [782] to the god, and their words of thanks lasted scarcely half a minute (1). At the time of our first trip on the Maruini, in 1948, the same scenes had unfolded, going as well as coming back.

1. Yet custom expressly provides for this rite of thanking.

241 771 Rites Relative to Agriculture

These rites occupy a relatively minor place in the religious life of the Refugee Blacks, which may be attributed to the great regularity of the climate and the absence of calamities affecting the yield of crops.

[613] It does not seem, at least among the Boni, that a religious bond is assumed between the lineage and the land, and rites intended to insure the fertility of the soil are carried out by each one for himself in the neighborhood of his own field; the lineage head does not appear to play any particular role in this regard. 241 776 In the thought of the Boni, the fertility of the soil depends upon a local divinity, to which is offered de facto worship; the temporary or permanent users of the lands situated in the domain of this god perform on their own behalf the rites of this worship without any distinction of origin, whether they are Boni, Djuka, or Saramaka.

[796] [793] [643] The only collective worship existing in Boni country is the worship of mama gɔ̃, of which the grand man is priest. Its rites are limited to a short annual prayer.

241 /259 cont./
776 Cult of Mama gɔ̃. Mama gɔ̃, mother of the earth, is repre-
[532) sented by a crude statue of white clay provided with enormous
[531) breasts, symbol of fecundity, which can be seen in a little
(778) hut situated on the open place of Boniville village. Each
[243) year, when the time for cutting the clearings approaches, the
(782) grand man, surrounded by many other people, prays to the
god to grant fertility to the plantings. If rain does not fall,
an offering of water and tafia is made and the statue is sprinkled.

811 The Boni do not appear to associate the idea of women's
fecundity with that of the fertility of the soil, and we have
not heard anyone say that the grand man prays on this subject.

241 Neither do they appear to have a very clear idea about
776 the relationships of this worship with that of the gɔ̃ gadu,
local gods of the soil.

796 Every three years a great possession dance takes place
535 in Boniville on January 1, /260/ in which the Papa gadu gods
787 dance in front of the sanctuary of Mama gɔ̃. We have not
been able to obtain specific information on the meaning of
this rite.

241 Cult of the gɔ̃ gadu. It is assumed that every portion of land
776 is under the sway of a local god, gɔ̃ gadu. Its power is
[784) limited only by the fertility of the soil, and he who neglects
its worship cannot be attacked in his person or in his goods,
but only punished by a poor harvest.

What is the nature of these gods, what is their place in the cosmogony? These are questions which not one of our informants had ever asked himself. In their minds, gɔ̃ gadu has a de facto existence, and is rendered de facto worship. This worship consists essentially of:

[782) --Offerings made at the moment of planting;

[527) --The observance of a local day of rest, kina dɛ, corresponding to the god's day of rest.

/280 cont./

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776 In order to observe these rites suitably, it is important then to know in which god's domain are situated the lands one is cultivating. On the banks of the great river, the division of the lands among the gods of the soil has been well known since the time of the ancestors. By summarizing the
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529 kina dɛ of the farming habitations, one realizes that the domain of each god is extensive; it occupies several kilometers along the banks. It is often thought (but not everywhere) that the two banks are controlled by different gods. For example:

Downstream from Boniville, right bank: Wednesday;
Toward Kormotibo, right bank: Thursday;
Toward the mouth of the Inini, both banks: Wednesday;
Toward Simayé Falls, both banks: Saturday.

On those days one may do nothing related to agriculture, and in particular one may not dig in the earth nor plant. If absolutely necessary one may go to pull up tubercules.

What one must avoid above all is handling tools which make noise and could disturb the god, except in the immediate vicinity of the water which is not under its control. However, one may shoot off a gun.

This kina dɛ is observed more strictly than Friday, the general kina dɛ in Boni country, which appears to be related to the cult of Mama gɔ̃. On those days people mend boats and especially go hunting and fishing.

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778 Offerings are made in a purely individual and local fashion; in each farming habitation is seen at the approaches to the wharf a worship place formed by a simple meat-drying rack decorated with pennants of several colors, on which the offerings are exposed; even if this habitation combines people of diverse kin groups, there is only one place of worship.

/260 cont./

241 778 People who have no farming habitation and who farm on the outskirts of /Fig. 20 appears here/ /261/ residence villages get together in groups of three or four to establish a worship place in a copse, preserved from the forest adjoining their clearings.

241 782 Cane juice, syrup, rice pounded fine but not cooked are offered.

They make this offering at the time of the plantings, saying, "Gadu, please come and eat a little, watch over us, thank you very much."

The Boni who observe the rites most faithfully renew this offering each month at the new moon.

If someone has two clearings in two different sectors, he performs the rites twice, each grõ gadu being entirely independent of the others.

241 171 On this subject one notices that the beliefs of the Refugee Blacks are much more systematized than those of the Creole populations of African origin in the West Indies. They do not think each field has an individual soul; neither do they apparently believe in the possibility of capturing the soul of the field in order to make the neighbor's field sterile out of revenge. These beliefs, which play such a large role in the popular magic of the West Indies, seem to be without exact counterpart in the beliefs of the Refugee Blacks.

241 [776] Interdictions and various rites. Cutting a clearing involves great dangers: it is necessary to avoid injuring the maleficent divinities of the bush, which have as supports well-defined plants and animals, by brutal destruction of these supports, and their wreaking inexorable revenge -- the kunu -- on the lineage of the unintentional sacrilege. It is therefore necessary to seek out these plants and animals and to carry out for each the rites recommended by the ancestors' experience without forgetting a single one. No Refugee Black would dream of

/261 cont./

241 neglecting these rites. Their rigorous observance has the effect of preventing farming from becoming for them a commercial activity and of keeping a religious and family feeling in it.

824 778 784 [776] --The kɔ̃kɔ̃ti (silk-cotton tree) is a much feared tree, for according to the elders each one of them shelters 12 categories of divinities, especially a Papa gadu and an Ampuku. So it is absolutely impossible to cut it. One must even be very careful not to injure its roots which spread far. The site of every one felled is preserved. Likewise people watch carefully so as not to injure the roots of the big silk-cotton trees often found in the villages.

824 778 776 361 Still, the fact that their site was chosen for setting up a village shows that people believe they can make an alliance with the divinities which reside in a silk-cotton tree and draw their protection upon themselves.

824 778 784 [776] --The katu tree (Bombax Surinamiensis), tree of very large size, living in symbiosis with a parasitic liana which appears to enclose it in a gigantic net, also shelters maleficent divinities (Ampuku, Papa gadu, Bumba gadu). One may cut it down after performing rites whose purpose is to transfer these divinities into another tree.

First, one must have procured from a man who possesses this remedy a pot of ɔbia containing an infusion of leaves in the middle of which is a bracelet of fibers. /262/ It costs [435] two liters of tafia, four liters of beverage (beer for example), one large piece of cloth, and one machete.

Having arrived at the foot of the tree, one bathes his body and machete with this infusion; one puts the fiber bracelet on one's arm. One also bathes several small sticks provided [822] with squares of white cloth (for the Papa gadu), dark blue and red (for the Ampuku), and a pinot palm (pina tšɔgɔ) leaf.

One plants the sticks at the foot of the tree, one strikes the trunk with the palm leaf while invoking the divinities of

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824 the tree: "Ala sani di dɛ na a udu ya, da mu kumɔto, beka
778 mi ɔ faa ɛŋ. Kɔm na a pina tɔ̃ŋgo: All things (suprahuman
784 entities) who are in this tree, leave it, for I am going to throw it to the ground; come into this palm leaf." One takes away the palm leaf and the little flags far from there into the interior of the lands, to a spot where nobody is likely to come to fell trees, and one arranges them beside some big tree. The divinities will come and settle there. Nevertheless, it is still necessary to wait almost a month to cut the katu tree, probably to leave the maleficent influences time to dissipate.

824 The Boni are so afraid of this tree that many of them,
778 deeming these precautions insufficient, give up the idea of
[illegible] cutting it down and go to establish their clearings elsewhere.
[171] The Creole gold miners of the Haut Maroni, who call it cottonwood, also attribute a maleficent influence to it and some of them do not cut it.

The Refugee Blacks fear also, but to a lesser degree, what they call kɔtkɔti, that is, the small trees of any species which, instead of having grown straight, have two angles
● [776] in their trunk like a Z. This is a very rare anomaly. In such
[784] a shrub is hidden a maleficent entity, taku sani, capable, if a man cut the trunk unintentionally, to take revenge on him by paralyzing a limb or even the whole body in a bent position. In order to see whether or not the entity is present in the shrub, there exists, according to the Boni, a very simple means: one gently brings the finger near the bent part. If he feels his finger held there to the point where he has trouble drawing it back, the genie is present! The power of autosuggestion characteristic of the Refugee Blacks shows itself clearly here.

[789] Rites exist for rendering the kɔtkɔti harmless, for cutting them with impunity, and even for using them in magic preparations, but we do not know the details. Kɔtkɔti are among the objects usually found in the chapels (ɔbia ɔsu) of Kumɛnti; we have even happened to see one used to fasten a

/262 cont./

874 978 door; it was a particularly feared kãndu that no thief would have dared to remove.

825 978 [776] --The Kãntamasu are the divinities, especially maleficent and hostile to men, who live in the termitaries (these are termites proper, who make their nest in the earth, and not wood lice, much more common). There is one to each termitary.

[789] After a meticulous examination of the soil of the clearing, one marks all the termitaries /263/ and sprinkles each of them with a preparation containing leaves, pink clay kukusa, and manioc juice. One adjures the genie to go away, no matter where.

[789] [784] [782] It happens that in spite of all the precautions taken a termitary is forgotten. Then, several days later, one will have the consternation of seeing the Kãntamasu reveal itself in someone of the lineage; it announces that it is going to exercise its kunu (curse). It is temporarily appeased by offerings of tafia, various drinks, red cloth.

776 198 787 The Kãntamasu call themselves the Akãio. Through the mouth of their bearers they speak a language nobody understands. However, when they wish to be understood by those present they speak Kumãnti.

755 784 Observation in Boniville, January, 1957:

A...., boatman of the border-fixing mission, asks for three days off. His wife, Masauman, has been ill for several days; divination (in this particular case the gita of a female relative in his lineage) showed that it was the doing of a Kãntamasu injured in the burning of the clearing which he himself, A...., cut for his wife in October. The Kãntamasu has not yet manifested itself directly, but a kunu threatens; to appease it he must put in action the remedy known only
000 to M...., an old man of Asisi. He will go to the spot, following

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#539 we ate, it was he who killed them; look at the brother-in-law below; go on down!" He dropped down. Death stunned him, then threw him aside.

(Same scene; Anansi's last child, then his wife Weison, drop down in turn. Anansi remains alone at the top of the tree.)

...Anansi stayed. He resisted, resisted until... he said: "Son-in-law, you know what you must do. I have eaten much of your meat, I am fat! Go and get banana leaves and many ashes, so that when I fall, my body may not burst and my fat be lost. If I fall on the bare ground, my body /278/ will burst." Death stood up, wou! cut banana leaves, picked up as many ashes as it could.

"Look well at the spot where I am going to fall, I am coming." Death looked at the pile of ashes! plaou! Anansi fell right in the middle (the ashes spurted out in every direction). In the time that Death took to wipe its eyes, Anansi had fled.

Thus it is that Anansi came to carry Death among us. Before, Death used to stay in the bush; it killed animals but not men. It is because of Anansi that it came to separate and kill men.

7) Anansi, Buchi Mama, and Wata Mama (1)

[196]

1. Maleficent divinities of the bush
and the water, which are not worshiped.

Anansi, one day, went into the bush. He went to see the Bush-Mama. He said to her: "Bush-Mama, will you have a tug-of-war with me?" /Fr. expression corde raide usually means "tightrope," but gist of story indicates transl. given. -- Tr./ The Bush-Mama said to him: "What? Have you looked at me? Strong as I am, you aspire to a tug-of-war against me?" He said: "Bush-Mama, you lie, you are not capable of vanquishing me. I am sure to pull you as far as the village, step by step.

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791 The Boni, as we have shown, do not feel that they are pagans. They think they worship the same god as the Christians, in a different way but just as valid; they feel that their moral principles are not inferior to those of the Christians, that they are expressed in practice by the same prescriptions and are in fact better obeyed(2).

[828] 2. We report here faithfully the point of view of those concerned without making any judgment of its worth; let us recall that their principles of living do not assume any moral conscience in the individual and rest entirely upon the fear of material punishments in the present life. But even this base gives them great practical effectiveness.

829 Only in their conception of their kinship and the family, in the absence of family life based on the indissolubly united couple, do they recognize that they live under another law. But they do not fail to notice that the populations of the Guianas who profess Christianity hardly put it into practice in their family life: the stability of marriages is appreciably greater among the Refugee Blacks.

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As for the cults of possession, the Boni feel that they worship de facto entities whose existence appears as tangible to them as light or weight to us. These ideas are bound up with a characteristic way of perceiving, touching deep zones of the mind which reasoning does not reach (3).

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3. Actually, it is observed in Black Africa that where cults